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HEGEL'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

The Logic of the Gods

JON STEWART

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Preface

Hegel philology is a highly complex matter. There are a number of different editions and translations that contain relevant information for Hegel's views on religion. For the sake of completeness, I have been obliged to make use of a large number of these. For the quotations, this created a problem of inconsistency in language and style. To remedy this, I have made a number of *stillschweigend* modifications to the translations. Most of these revisions have been very minor such as modifying orthography and punctuation. Many of the older translations have the unfortunate habit of partially following the German practice of putting the nouns in the upper case, especially for key terms such as "Spirit" or "Absolute Knowing," etc. I have in most cases revised this by putting these terms in the lower case in order to make them better conform to standard modern English.

With regard to the editions of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, I have, of course, primarily made use of the new edition edited by Walter Jaeschke.¹ References have been given to this edition and its English translation, edited by Peter C. Hodgson.² For passages that only appear in the older edition, references have been made to the well-known translation by E.B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson.³

A part of the source material has never been translated into English. This includes both the sources that Hegel himself used and the sources about the reception of his philosophy of religion during his lifetime and in the decades following his death. For these materials I have generally provided my own translations, again *stillschweigend*, for the sake of readability. All translations from the Bible come from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

¹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Parts 1–3, ed. by Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1983–85, 1993–95 (hereafter *VPR*).

² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vols 1–3, ed. by Peter C. Hodgson, trans. by Robert F. Brown, Peter C. Hodgson and J.M. Stewart with the assistance of H.S. Harris, Berkeley et al.: University of California Press 1984–87 (hereafter *LPR*).

³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vols 1–3, trans. by E.B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York: The Humanities Press 1962, 1968, 1972 (hereafter *Phil. of Religion*).

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I presented parts of this work as lectures at different universities, and the manuscript has improved as a result of the feedback that I received on those occasions. The Introduction along with other parts of the text were presented under the title “Hegel’s Conception of Christianity in His Philosophy of Religion,” at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre at the University of Copenhagen, on September 12, 2014. A variant of this lecture was given at Leiden University College, Faculteit Campus Den Haag on November 19, 2015, at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary, on May 12, 2016, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University on October 19, 2016, and the Philosophy Department at Boston University on November 4, 2016.

A draft of a part of Chapter 1 was presented under the title “Hegel, Creuzer and the Rise of Orientalism: A Study in Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion,” at the Philosophy Department at the University of Tromsø in Norway, on March 5, 2014. Part of Chapter 7 was presented as “Hegel’s Account of the Ancient Egyptian Religion as a Transition from Nature to Spirit,” at the Conference: “Europe, Christianity and the Encounter with Other Religions in Kierkegaard and 19th Century Religious Thinking,” sponsored by The Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre and The Centre for European Islamic Thought, on May 9, 2012, and at the Institut Universitari de Cultura at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, on May 24, 2012. A part of Chapter 8 was given as a lecture under the title, “The Religion of the Sublime: Hegel’s Controversial Account of Judaism,” at Yeshiva University in New York City on November 16, 2016. Sections of Chapter 9 were presented under the title “Hegel’s Interpretation of the Greek Religion as a Religion of Spirit,” at the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University on December 13, 2016.

Earlier versions of some of the material from this work have appeared previously in printed form. I am thankful to the following journals for allowing me to reprint this material in the present work: *Filozofia*, *The Owl of Minerva*, the *Hegel Bulletin*, the *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, and *Hegel-Studien*. This work was produced at the Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences. It was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the contract No. APVV-15-0682.

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Abbreviations of Primary Texts

<i>Aesthetics</i>	<i>Hegel's Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art</i> , vols 1–2, trans. by T.M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975, 1998.
<i>AR</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion</i> , Dritter Teil, <i>Die absolute Religion</i> , ed. by Georg Lasson, Hamburg Felix Meiner 1974 [1929] (second half of vol. 2 of <i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion</i> , vols 1–2, ed. by Georg Lasson, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1974), vol. 14 in <i>Hegel, Sämtliche Werke</i> , ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1920–.
<i>Briefe</i>	<i>Briefe von und an Hegel</i> , vols 1–4, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister (vols 4.1 and 4.2, ed. by Friedhelm Nicolin), 3rd ed., Hamburg: Meiner 1961–81.
<i>Difference</i>	<i>The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy</i> , ed. and trans. by H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf, New York: State University of New York Press 1977.
<i>Dokumente</i>	<i>Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung</i> , ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister, Stuttgart: Frommann 1936.
<i>EL</i>	<i>The Encyclopaedia Logic. Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences</i> , trans. by T.F. Gerats, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett 1991.
<i>Episode</i>	<i>On the Episode of the Mahabharata Known by the Name Bhagavad-Gita by Wilhelm von Humboldt</i> , trans. by Herbert Herring, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research 1995.
<i>ETW</i>	<i>Early Theological Writings</i> , trans. by T.M. Knox, Fragments trans. by Richard Kroner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1948, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1975.
<i>GRW</i>	<i>Die griechische und die römische Welt</i> , ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1923 (vol. 3 of <i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte</i> , vols 1–5, ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1920–3).
<i>Hegel's Library</i>	<i>Verzeichniß der von dem Professor Herrn Dr. Hegel und dem Dr. Herrn Seebeck, hinterlassenen Bücher-Sammlungen</i> , Berlin: C.F. Müller 1832. (Referenced by entry number and not page number.) (This work is reprinted in “Hegels Bibliothek. Der Versteigerungskatalog von 1832,” ed. by Helmut Schneider in <i>Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung</i> , vols 12–14, 2010, pp. 70–145.)
<i>Hist. of Phil.</i>	<i>Lectures on the History of Philosophy</i> , vols 1–3, trans. by E.S. Haldane, London K. Paul, Trench, Trübner 1892–6, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1995.

- Jub.* *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*, vols 1–20, ed. by Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 1928–41.
- Letters* *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1984.
- LHP* *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: The Lectures of 1825–1826*, vols 1–3, ed. by Robert F. Brown, trans. by Robert F. Brown and J.M. Stewart, with the assistance of H.S. Harris, Berkeley et al.: University of California Press and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990–2009.
- LPR* *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vols 1–3, ed. by Peter C. Hodgson, trans. by Robert F. Brown, P.C. Hodgson, and J.M. Stewart with the assistance of H.S. Harris, Berkeley et al.: University of California Press 1984–7.
- LPWH* *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vols 1–3, ed. and trans. by Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson, with the assistance of William G. Geuss, Oxford: Clarendon Press 2011–.
- LPWHI* *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction*, trans. by H.B. Nisbet, with an introduction by Duncan Forbes, Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press 1975.
- MW* *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2002.
- NR* *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Zweiter Teil, *Die Bestimmte Religion*, Erstes Kapitel, *Die Naturreligion*, ed. by Georg Lasson, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1974 [1927] (second half of vol. 1 of *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, vols 1–2, ed. by Georg Lasson, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1974), vol. 13.1 in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1920–.
- OW* *Die orientalische Welt*, ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1923 (vol. 2 of *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vols 1–4, ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1920–3).
- Phil. of Hist* *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree, New York: Willey Book Co. 1944.
- Phil. of Mind* *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1971.
- Phil. of Religion* *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vols 1–3, trans. by E.B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York: The Humanities Press 1962, 1968, 1972.
- PhS* *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1977.
- PR* *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. by H.B. Nisbet, ed. by Allen Wood, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1991.

- RGI** *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Zweiter Teil, *Die Bestimmte Religion*, Zweites Kapitel, *Die Religionen der geistigen Individualität*, ed. by Georg Lasson, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1974 [1929] (first half of vol. 2 of *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, vols 1–2, ed. by Georg Lasson, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1974), vol. 13.2 in Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1920–.
- SL** *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. by A.V. Miller, London: George Allen and Unwin 1989.
- TE** *Three Essays, 1793–1795*, ed. and trans. by Peter Fuss and John Dobbins, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1984.
- TJ** *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. by Herman Nohl, Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr 1907.
- VG** *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. by Georg Lasson, 3rd augmented edition, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1930 (vol. 1 of *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vols 1–4, ed. by Georg Lasson, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1920–3).
- VGH** *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister, 5th augmented edition, Leipzig: Felix Meiner 1955 (vol. 1 of *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vols 1–4, ed. by Georg Lasson and Johannes Hoffmeister, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1955).
- VGP** *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vols 1–4, ed. by Pierre Garniron and Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1986–96. (This corresponds to vols 6–9 in the edition, Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vols 1–17, Hamburg: Meiner 1983–2008.)
- VPR** *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Parts 1–3, ed. by Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1983–5, 1993–5. (This corresponds to vols 3–5 in the edition, Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vols 1–17, Hamburg: Meiner 1983–2008. Part 1, *Einleitung. Der Begriff der Religion* = vol. 3. Part 2, *Die Bestimmte Religion. a: Text* = vol. 4a. Part 2, *Die Bestimmte Religion. b: Anhang* = vol. 4b. Part 3, *Die vollendete Religion* = vol. 5.)
- VPWG** *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte: Berlin 1822–1823*, ed. by Karl Heinz Ilting, Karl Brehmer, and Hoo Nam Seelmann, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1996. (This corresponds to vol. 12 in the edition, Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vols 1–17, Hamburg: Meiner 1983–2008.)

“ . . . man pictures himself in his gods.”

Friedrich von Schiller, “The Nature and Value of Universal History”

Introduction

The Neglect of the Historical Dimension of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion

It has long been a cliché in overviews of modern philosophy to point out that one of Hegel's great contributions was to make philosophers aware of the importance of history for an understanding of truth and objectivity. For this reason his Introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* remains one of his best-known texts. It is claimed that unlike most of his predecessors, who proceeded in an ahistorical fashion, Hegel innovatively used his profound appreciation and understanding of history to shape his reflections on the key issues of metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, and social-political philosophy. Hegel argues that concepts must be understood not just as abstractions but also in their concrete instantiations in the real world, and his account of history is a part of this.

Despite this awareness and appreciation of the important role of history in Hegel's thought, scholars working on his philosophy of religion have almost entirely ignored this dimension. Most studies of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* simply disregard the long and highly detailed historical analyses of the world religions that he carries out under the rubric "the determinate religion" (*die bestimmte Religion*). Instead, they choose to focus primarily on two other sets of issues which can be regarded as representative of the two main tendencies in the secondary literature.

One of these is to concentrate on the first part of Hegel's analysis that falls under the heading, "The Concept of Religion," where he discusses broadly the nature of religion and its relation to philosophy and other forms of knowing. Here Hegel presents the organization and methodology of the lectures, outlining his conception of a speculative philosophy of religion. He further attempts to determine the correct concept of the divine. The tendency in the secondary literature to focus just on this initial part of Hegel's account of religion is analogous to the general practice taken with regard to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where most people read only his famous

Introduction, in which he distinguishes the different kinds of historiography and proposes his own methodology for a philosophical or speculative understanding of history. With this the sole object of attention, readers, however, wholly ignore his actual historical analyses, which constitute the large bulk of the lectures and are their main object. Similarly, with the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the key historical discussions of the different world religions are wholly overlooked due to a myopic focus on the preliminary material. In this case readers fail to understand how "The Concept of Religion" applies to his treatment of the actual religions of the world. So they can be said to know the theory but never actually see it applied in practice.

The second tendency focuses not on *the beginning* of the lectures but on *the end*, namely, on Hegel's account of Christianity as the "absolute" or "consummate religion." The intuition guiding this approach is that Hegel is a Christian thinker, who is interested in defending his special interpretation of Christianity. Given this, everything else in his lectures is, according to this view, simply leading up to this goal, and for the sake of expediency one can simply go straight to his analysis of Christianity instead of painstakingly working one's way through many pages of tedious material that, in the end, are merely preparatory anyway. Hegel's defense of Christianity, it is thought, can be understood on its own terms, and the accounts that he gives of the other religions are at best of secondary importance.

Neither of these tendencies is particularly troubled by its omission of Hegel's analysis of the different world religions. However, the basic insight that Hegel's understanding of history is key to his general approach should alert one to the importance of this material for the overall argument that Hegel wishes to make. If one is an advocate of the first tendency, that is, of focusing on the first part of Hegel's lectures, where he discusses the concept of religion and his methodology, then it would seem logical that one would wish to see how this understanding of religion and how this method in fact looks in practice, namely, by having a look at his actual historical analyses. Similarly, if one is an advocate of the second tendency, that is, of seeing Hegel as a Christian thinker and of focusing on the last part of his lectures, then it would seem obvious that one would want to understand the full force of his defense of Christianity by coming to terms with what he takes to be the shortcomings of the other religions that preceded it in the historical development. But despite what might seem to be clear and straightforward reasons to take seriously Hegel's account of the different world religions, this part of his lectures has sadly languished in neglect.

There are presumably many different reasons for the lack of interest in the historical material that lies between the introductory methodological discussions at the beginning of Hegel's philosophy of religion and the culminating account of Christianity at the end. First, this material is profoundly detailed and requires a broad range of expertise in the different world religions that is

intimidating for cautious specialized scholars today. While most commentators feel generally competent to judge what Hegel has to say about Christianity or perhaps the Greek religion, they feel rather vulnerable and uncertain when it comes to his analyses of Eastern religions. Thus, instead of wading out into uncertain waters, most scholars simply opt to ignore and marginalize what they do not understand. Unfortunately, this means in effect leaving out a vast amount of material covering many pages in Hegel's analysis.

Second, there is a general view that Hegel's information about the different world religions is highly dated by our modern standards especially with regard to non-Western religions. In other words, there is a lingering sense that his accounts of, for example, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and the Egyptian religion are misinformed due to the inaccurate information that he was working with. He lived in a period when Europe was only just beginning to learn about Eastern cultures and languages; this was the time when Indology, Persian Studies, and Egyptology began to be established as scholarly disciplines. Although he dutifully read everything that he could lay hands on—accounts of China by Jesuit missionaries, descriptions of India by British colonists, and a multitude of exotic travel reports by Europeans venturing out into the unknown—nonetheless, it is thought, he was only able to acquire a highly distorted view of non-Western cultures.

Again, this is a convenient way to dismiss a large amount of material that one does not wish to treat. The claim about Hegel's use of mistaken or distorted information is almost always made in the abstract and not with concrete reference to the sources that he was in fact using. Indeed, only fairly recently has there been an interest in examining his sources closely and to see what he took from them. The argument is usually made based on the simple assumption that what was written about foreign cultures during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was wholly mistaken when compared to our modern standards. However, a careful examination of Hegel's sources reveals that the accounts he read did not always deviate so radically from our modern views as one is often led to believe.¹ While mistakes and inaccuracies in Hegel's sources do exist, this is not to say that Hegel received a completely distorted view of the different religions and cultures that he studied. At any rate, this is an issue that can only be adjudicated on a case-to-case basis, and the matter cannot be resolved generally with a simple wave of the hand.

¹ Compare the claim made by Roger-Pol Droit in his *The Cult of Nothingness: The Philosophers and the Buddha*, trans. by David Streight and Pamela Vohnson, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press 2003, p. 58: "Hegel was extremely attentive to the progress of Orientalism. As scholarly works appeared, he acquainted himself with those that dealt with Persian, Sanskrit, and Chinese. His courses relative to the Orient, whether they were on art, religion, or world history, were founded on first-hand documentation. The philosopher undoubtedly altered the information available, sometimes markedly, to be able to make it fit into his system. But the accuracy of his information was generally remarkable."

A responsible judgment requires a detailed overview of and intimate familiarity with Hegel's sources.

Third, there is an important view that goes hand-in-hand with the one just mentioned. In recent years there has been a quickly growing body of secondary literature arguing that Hegel's views are decidedly Eurocentric, ethnocentric, and even straightforwardly racist.² It is commonly held that, like most Europeans of the day, he was simply prejudiced and negatively disposed towards any religion except Christianity, and, as a result, his analyses of non-Western religions cannot be taken seriously. According to the charitable version of this view, he cannot be faulted for these shortcomings and prejudices since all of his sources suffered from the same flaws. In any case, it is thought that he cannot in principle have anything meaningful to say about the different religions of the world since all of his analyses are marred by a pernicious prejudiced disposition typical of European scholars of the day. It is but a short step from this to claiming that his historical accounts can be safely skipped over since they can have no beneficial effect on the reader and do not facilitate an understanding of religious phenomena.

While it is true that Hegel, like all human beings, has his prejudices and does express himself in ways that we would regard as ethnocentric or racist by our contemporary cultural standards, it does not follow from this that he has absolutely nothing meaningful to say about the world religions. Simply because we can identify *some* of his statements as racist, it does not follow that *all* of them are. Of course, we have a duty to identify and criticize whatever ethnocentric or racist elements that we find, but this can be done without a wholesale rejection of his entire philosophy of religion. Moreover, Hegel's critics on this issue implicitly rely on a theory of equality, human rights, and the value of the individual that, in fact, Hegel himself helped to bring about. Some version of his account of subjective freedom and the irreducible importance of the individual vis-à-vis oppressive customs and institutions is at work in the views of those who wish to dismiss him by branding him

² This body of literature represents a new and important contribution to Hegel studies, which traditionally had simply ignored or dismissed this dubious aspect of his thought. See, for example, Teshale Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2011. Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," in *Hegel after Derrida*, ed. by Stuart Barnett, New York: Routledge 1998, pp. 41–63. Robert Bernasconi, "With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Eurocentrism," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, vol. 22, 2000, pp. 171–201. Robert Bernasconi, "The Return of Africa: Hegel and the Question of the Racial Identity of the Egyptians," in *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel's Logic, Philosophy of Spirit and Politics*, ed. by Philip Grier, Albany, State University of New York Press 2007, pp. 201–16. Babacar Camara, "The Falsity of Hegel's Theses on Africa," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2005, pp. 82–96. Michael H. Hoffheimer, "Hegel, Race, Genocide," *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 39 (supplement), 2001, pp. 35–62. Michael H. Hoffheimer, "Race and Law in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion," in *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Andrew Valls, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 2005, pp. 194–216.

ethnocentric or racist. So ironically, it is impossible to criticize Hegel here without in another sense agreeing with him and having recourse to his theory of what it is to be human.

Fourth, another problem has to do with Hegel's teleology. Most studies of Hegel's philosophy of religion ignore his striking claim that the history of the world religions follows a necessary *telos*. It is quite unfashionable today to claim that the development of the religions of the world leads to a culminating point in Christianity, which is the only true religion. Such claims offend our modern sensibilities almost as quickly as racist or ethnocentric statements. As a result, otherwise sympathetic commentators have discreetly ignored these claims since they regard them as wholly indefensible. This fact also explains why there has not been much interest in the historical dimension of Hegel's lectures.

The problem with this approach is that to ignore Hegel's claim about the teleological trajectory of the world religions means to miss the entire point of his account of the historical development. It is simply impossible to understand his analyses of either Christianity or the other religions without keeping in mind this idea. However, it does not follow from this that everything that precedes the endpoint of the account is false and meaningless.³ Indeed, Hegel devotes a great deal of time and effort to understanding these other religions. Far from dismissing them, Hegel warns his auditors against prejudice towards this material:

A survey of these religions reveals what supremely marvelous and bizarre flights of fancy the nations have hit upon in their representations of the divine essence and of their [own] duties and modes of conduct. To cast aside these religious representations and usages as superstition, error, and fraud is to take a superficial view of the matter . . .⁴

³ On this point I concur with José Ortega y Gasset's understanding. See Luanne Buchanan and Michael H. Hoffheimer, "Hegel and America by José Ortega y Gasset," *Clio*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1995, p. 71: "Hegel's historical philosophy has the ambition of justifying each epoch, each human stage, and avoiding the error of vulgar progressivism that considers all that is past as essential barbarity. . . . Hegel wants to demonstrate . . . that what is historical is an emanation of reason; that the past has good sense; or . . . that universal history is not a string of foolish acts. Rather Hegel wants to demonstrate that in the gigantic sequence of history something serious has happened, something that has reality, structure and reason. And to this end he tries to show that all periods have had reason, precisely because they were different and even contradictory."

⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 198; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 107. See also Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 310f.; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 417. As early as "The Tübingen Essay" Hegel upbraids people who wish to denigrate the pagan religions (*TE*, p. 38; *TJ*, p. 10): "whoever finds that other people's modes of representation—heathens, as they are called—contain so much absurdity that they cause him to delight in his own higher insights, his understanding, which convinces him that he sees further than the greatest of men saw, does not comprehend the essence of religion. Someone who calls Jehovah Jupiter or Brahma and is truly pious offers his gratitude or his sacrifice in just as childlike a manner as does the true Christian."

He enjoins his auditors to take the different religions seriously and devote a careful study to them: "It is easy to say that such a religion is just senseless and irrational. What is not easy is to recognize the necessity and truth of such religious forms, their connection with reason; and seeing that is a more difficult task than declaring something to be senseless."⁵ Since religion is a product of the human mind, it must contain some rationality that is accessible to the inquiring subject. There is thus an inherent *logos* in religious belief and practice, regardless of how absurd it might strike us at first glance. Although there is a teleology in the development of religion, according to Hegel, this does not imply that everything prior to the culmination of the development is absurd. On the contrary, Hegel can be seen as making a plea, progressive at the time, for the careful study of non-European religions.

On the whole, this body of historical material about the world religions is something of an embarrassment for sympathetic readers today. They want to explore Hegel's defense of Christianity, but before they can get to this, there stand in the way, inconveniently enough, several hundred pages of material, which are rather difficult and, to their mind, less than convincing. The natural reaction has been simply to omit this material and try to keep it an inside trade secret. But this approach can only lead to new misunderstandings since Hegel clearly intended for the historical analyses to do substantial work in his overall argumentation. Whether he was right or wrong, prejudiced or disabused, well or ill informed, it is impossible to escape the fact that he saw these historical analyses as being absolutely essential for a correct understanding of the nature of religion and ultimately Christianity.

In short, the reason for the neglect of the historical dimension of Hegel's analysis is presumably the belief that this is simply an untenable part of his overall project due to the reasons outlined above. None of the standard works on Hegel's philosophy of religion really takes seriously the historical dimension, which he spends so much time and energy elaborating. It is clear that this historical material is absolutely central to his argumentative strategy and ultimate goal, but yet it has been almost completely neglected.

To date there are only three short single-author monographic studies that treat Hegel's account of the "determinate religions": Ernst Schulin's *Die*

⁵ *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 570; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 467. See also Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 198; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 107: "The higher need is to apprehend what it means, its positive and true [significance], its connection with what is true—in short, its *rationality*. After all it is human beings who have lighted upon such religions, so there must be reason in them—in everything contingent there must be a higher necessity." *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 195f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 261: "However erroneous a religion may be, it possesses truth, although in a mutilated phase. In every religion there is a divine presence, a divine relation; and a philosophy of history has to seek out the spiritual element even in the most imperfect forms."

weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke, from 1958,⁶ Reinhard Leuze's *Die außerchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel*, from 1975,⁷ and Michel Hulin's *Hegel et l'orient*, from 1979.⁸ The first two of these were Ph.D. dissertations. As the title suggests, Schulin's work is a comparative study of Hegel and the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886). While this study contains much that is relevant for Hegel's account of the different world religions, its main focus is the philosophy of history and not the philosophy of religion. Specifically, this work wishes to explore the significance of the rising awareness of the East in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for European ways of thinking about history in the nineteenth century. Schulin gives accounts of Hegel's treatment of China, India, Persia, Phoenicia, Israel, and Egypt, but since his focus is confined to Hegel's conception of the Orient, he does not go on to treat Hegel's understanding of the Greek and Roman world. No attempt is made to link Hegel's treatment of the Orient with his understanding of European religion and culture. In other words, the material on the Orient is treated on its own and not as part of a wider analysis that includes the West.

Leuze's investigation, by contrast, is much closer to the present study in its angle and method. First, this is a work dedicated to Hegel's philosophy of religion, and so the author is concerned specifically to reconstruct Hegel's different accounts of the world religions. Second, since he is not focused primarily on Hegel's treatment of the oriental world, Leuze goes on to explore Hegel's analysis of both the Greek and Roman religion. This study is particularly to be praised for its attempt to make use of all of Hegel's scattered statements about the different religions, regardless of where they appear in his *corpus*. This allows the author to understand how Hegel's views developed over time as he learned more about the different world religions. Unfortunately, however, since it stops without further ado after the treatment of the Roman religion, this study misses out on the main advantage that it could provide, namely, to show how Hegel's treatment of the different world religions is relevant for his defense of Christianity.

The third study, Michel Hulin's *Hegel et l'orient*, makes use of both the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* to reconstruct Hegel's account of the different oriental cultures and religions. The treatments are somewhat uneven, since the author devotes more

⁶ Ernst Schulin, *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1958.

⁷ Reinhard Leuze, *Die außerchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1975 (*Theologie und Geistesgeschichte des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 14).

⁸ Michel Hulin, *Hegel et l'orient, suivi de la traduction annotée d'un essai de Hegel sur la Bhagavad-Gita*, Paris: J. Vrin 1979.

pages to India than to all of the other religions combined.⁹ In particular the accounts of Hegel's analysis of Persia, Egypt, and Israel are rather superficial.

In addition to these three single-author monographs, there has appeared an anthology entitled *Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions*, which in many ways can be regarded as a forerunner of the present study.¹⁰ This useful collection, edited by Bart Labuschagne and Timo Slootweg, features articles by different scholars on Hegel's treatment of magic, the Chinese religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, the Egyptian religion, the Greek religion, Judaism, and the Roman religion. Moreover, this collection goes on, in individual articles, to explore Hegel's treatment of Christianity, Islam, and Protestantism. In this way it correctly portrays Hegel's understanding of the non-European religions as a part of his overall argument for Christianity and not as an isolated or separate topic. The contributing authors recognize the complexity of the topic and realize that it calls for specialized expertise in the individual religions treated. The only shortcoming of this volume, if one can call it that, lies in its nature as a multi-author collection. Since there are many different contributing authors involved, no single thesis or line of thought is developed throughout the entire work. Instead, the individual chapters are more or less episodic in their treatments, using different approaches and methodologies. This anthology can be seen as a reflection of the growing scholarly interest in Hegel's treatment of the different world religions; it is, without doubt, the most extensive and useful single volume on the topic to date.

Like these studies, I wish to give an overview of Hegel's account of the historical material about the religions of the world and make this the primary focus of the investigation and interpretation. Also like these works, I wish to explore in some depth Hegel's sources of information about the different religions and the state of the scholarship at the time in the different fields that we today refer to under the broad rubrics of Asian, Near Eastern, and Classical Studies. This will help us to put Hegel's statements into a more concrete context that will facilitate an understanding of his overall views. While Schulin, Leuze, and Hulin make valiant attempts to reconstruct Hegel's sources, they ultimately only begin to scratch the surface of the vast amount of material that needs to be explored in order to understand Hegel's different treatments.

I wish to argue that Hegel's interpretation and defense of Christianity cannot be properly understood without an appreciation of his assessment of

⁹ That the author is most interested in India and Hinduism is attested by the fact that the work also included the author's French translation of Hegel's book review of Wilhelm von Humboldt's treatise on the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

¹⁰ *Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions*, ed. by Bart Labuschagne and Timo Slootweg, Leiden and Boston: Brill 2012.

the other world religions. A key claim in his argument is that the different religions develop historically parallel to the development of human culture and spirit. This development implies that contradictory, inconsistent, or inadequate views gradually fall away in the course of history. This is also true of the conception of the divine that one finds in the different religions. According to Hegel's view, other religions have an inadequate conception of the divine, and only with Christianity is the correct and complete conception attained. But in order to appreciate and comprehend this, one must first understand why the previous conceptions were inadequate and incomplete. Thus it is impossible to get a full understanding of Hegel's defense of Christianity simply by looking at his analysis of it on its own. One must see it as a part of the general historical development of religion and indeed of human culture.

As is well known, Hegel traces the development of human freedom in his account of the philosophy of history; but there is a lesser known pendant to this in his account of religion. The different concepts of the divine in the world religions reflect different levels in the development of human freedom. Just as human beings develop and come to realize their freedom, so also do they develop conceptions of the gods that reflect this feature. Therefore, Hegel's general account of religion, once again, cannot be separated from his account of the historical development of the different world religions. For these reasons, I wish to explore in detail Hegel's historical interpretation of these various world religions. This will be the primary focus of the present study, guiding both its organization and its analysis.

To sum up the foregoing, I wish to argue for the following main theses. First, the historical dimension of Hegel's account of religion is the key to his understanding of religion generally and his account of Christianity specifically. The analyses under the rubric "the determinate religion," that is, the different forms of religion prior to Christianity, are not simply irrelevant historical tangents, as they have generally been regarded to be. Instead, they play a central role in Hegel's argument for the truth of Christianity. Only when one gains an appreciation of his understanding of the other religions of the world can one fully understand his defense of Christianity.

Second, the other parts of Hegel's system, for example, his aesthetics and his philosophy of history are highly relevant for his views on religion. Given the systematic nature of his thought, his other works and lectures can fruitfully supplement his most detailed statement about religion in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. There are numerous points of overlap where his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, and *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* can be insightful for his views on the different world religions. In addition to the lectures, useful analyses can also be gleaned from the relevant sections of the works published by Hegel himself. A number of other texts including the so-called *Early Theological Writings* and his book

reviews also offer helpful insights into his understanding of religion. All of these works should be regarded as valuable resources for coming to terms with Hegel's overall theory of religion. One of Hegel's key claims is that the conception of the divine in a given culture or people is necessarily bound up with the other aspects of spirit found in that people, for example, its political constitution, its art, and its philosophy. It follows from this that in an account of his philosophy of religion we need to examine not just those works which purport to treat religion explicitly but also those which explore related issues in a similar manner, for example, his philosophy of history, aesthetics, history of philosophy, and political philosophy.

Third, I wish to demonstrate that, for Hegel, the conception of the divine is necessarily related to the conception of a people and the individual. The question of what the divine is in a given culture is closely connected to the question of what a human being is. If the divine is conceived in a certain way, for example, as a part of nature or as a tyrant, then the conception of human beings will be necessarily determined accordingly. The self-conception of the individual is reflected in the conception of the divinity, or vice versa the conception of the divine is reflected in the conception of the individual.

Fourth, the story about the development of human freedom through the ages that Hegel wishes to tell in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* can also be found in a slightly different form in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Since (per the third thesis) the understanding of what human beings are is a function of the understanding of what the gods are, by studying the conception of the divine of a given group of people, one can learn about their conception of themselves and their views of their own power and agency in the world. The story of the development of the concept of the divine is thus also the story of the realization of human freedom. As people come to liberate themselves from nature, this is reflected in the way in which they think about the divine. Thus by examining Hegel's understanding of the development of the conception of the gods, we can gain useful insight into his conception of human freedom.

Fifth, while the rise of interest in Asia among German philosophers is often associated with Schopenhauer's use of Buddhism or Nietzsche's appropriation of Zarathustra or Zoroaster, in fact, Hegel played a significant and early role in this development. He was one of the first German thinkers (after Herder and concurrently with Friedrich von Schlegel and Schelling), who made a conscientious attempt to understand the culture and religions of the Near and Far East. He attempts to include an account of the different world religions in his analysis in such a way that they can be understood as a part of a grand historical narrative that culminates in Christianity. Hegel's role in the early growth of Asian Studies in the Germanophone world has not been adequately recognized or documented.

Finally, the issues concerning Hegel's treatment of the non-European religions are still very much with us today. They make Hegel's account of religion an issue of topicality in the academic landscape of the twenty-first century. Therefore, this account needs to be addressed seriously and soberly if we are to determine whether Hegel has anything meaningful to say to us in our time about topics of religion. Of course, one should not turn a blind eye to Hegel's weaknesses or the prejudices of his age but rather see them for what they are and criticize them when they are deserving of criticism. But it is important to come to terms with this dimension of Hegel's thought since the issues of multiculturalism and Eurocentrism that we are familiar with today found their beginning in Hegel's time. The discussions that Hegel participated in with his contemporaries were the forerunners to discussions that are still going on in our age. Thus a study of Hegel's treatments of the different world religions is not an arcane, purely historical undertaking but rather should be regarded as highly relevant for some of the key issues that animate our own academic world.

Hegel's Methodology

Hegel is well known for his theory of recognition, made famous by the “Lordship and Bondage” section in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹ His influential argument there was that in order to be who we are as self-conscious human beings, we need the recognition of others. It is a necessary feature of our mental life that we have the opportunity to see ourselves from the perspective of the other. Indeed, self-consciousness consists in this ability. We become who we are by recognizing others and being recognized by them.

But the dialectic of recognition is not just about isolated individuals but also constitutes the basis for Hegel's social-political philosophy: social relations and the mutual interaction of individuals in society are also deeply dependent on recognition. Hegel conceives of metaphysics as the determination of objects by means of basic categories of the mind. In his account we see that these determinations take place by means of a dialectic of opposites. Things are determined by their negative relation to their opposition. This occurs at a higher level with human beings in the dialectic of recognition. One individual determines himself in opposition to another.² So also larger social groups and institutions are determined in opposition to others. This same dynamic is at work in the different conceptions of the divine that Hegel traces in his philosophy of religion. People can only conceive of the divine as a self-conscious entity if they themselves have reached the level of self-consciousness where they enjoy the recognition of others.

A part of Hegel's analysis of the lord and the bondsman is that at first the limit of the bondsman is the lord. It is the lord who prevents the bondsman from immediately fulfilling his desires. In Hegel's language the lord “negates” the bondsman. But after this relation is established, the bondsman comes to internalize this negation and to control his desires himself through work and

¹ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 111–19; *Jub.* vol. 2, pp. 148–58. See also *Phil. of Mind*, §§ 430–5; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 280–9.

² See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 674; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 566: “The way in which one human being is related to another—that is just what is human, that is human nature itself. When we are cognizant of how an object is related [to everything else], then we are cognizant of its very nature.”

discipline. Thus the bondsman comes to “negate” himself. This is, for Hegel, a key characteristic of self-conscious entities who can deprive themselves of the fulfillment of their natural desires by an act of the mind, whereas animals presumably simply act immediately based on their desires. Controlling our natural impulses and urges is key to becoming who we are as human beings and raising ourselves above nature and to spirit.

This dynamic is also an important element in Hegel's understanding of the divine. Thought creates its own oppositions. The different conceptions of the divine are thoughts, and they follow this same dynamic. The first conception of the divine is that of pure universality. But this remains indeterminate. This is God *for himself* (*für sich*), apart from any relations to others. Here the divine is an object of thought but not yet a developed self-conscious subject. This represents simply the abstract conception of God, for example, in Deism, but not any concrete deity of any specific religion. But this is only the first stage.

In order for the divine to become a subject, it must stand opposed to another self-conscious subject. This then is the second stage in the conception of the divine, that of particularity, that is, God *for another* (*für ein Anderes*). Here the divine is conceived as existing as a concrete entity in the world vis-à-vis the religious believer. The self-consciousness of the religious believer is reflected in the divine, and thus the divine is transformed from object of thought to self-conscious subject. The divine is a self-conscious subject since it is reflected in a self-conscious subject: “God knows himself in humanity, and human beings, to the extent that they know themselves as spirit and in their truth, know themselves in God. This is the concept of religion, that God knows himself in spirit and spirit knows itself in God.”³ It is clear that Hegel thinks that the divine and human mutually determine each other. Each needs the other to develop to what it is. The conception of the divine is therefore mutable in accordance with the different self-conceptions of human beings as these develop in history.

Self-consciousness is only what it is vis-à-vis another self-consciousness. Likewise, Spirit is only Spirit vis-à-vis another being invested with Spirit. The relation between the two is essential since the conception of God is necessarily bound up with the self-conception of the individual. For Hegel, it is natural to speak of the divine as being essentially related to an other. Here the key is his term “spirit” (*Geist*).⁴ When we say that God is spirit, we mean that he is a self-conscious entity. Spirit is something that the gods and their human followers share. This makes it possible for the believers to find themselves in God.

Hegel's use of the term “spirit” is complex since it has a number of different nuances that are not always immediately obvious in English. First, the basic distinction in Hegel's philosophy is between spirit and nature. Nature is that

³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 465; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 354.

⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 178; *VPR*, Part 1, pp. 86f.

which is given externally, while spirit refers to the human mind and its products, in short, the vast sphere of human culture in all of its forms. This means that religion, as a product of the human mind, is closely connected to other phenomena such as art or philosophy, which are also products of the human mind. While in our specialized world today we tend to think of these as separate and distinct areas of inquiry, this is a relatively new way of thinking. In ancient times no clear distinctions were made. Thus it is not uncommon that many of the texts from antiquity that tell us most about ancient cultures contain what might appear at first glance as an odd combination of different things: poetry, history, religious ritual, law, etc. "Spirit" contains all of these things and understands them as closely bound together. For this reason, Hegel often makes use of art, history, or even philosophy in his account of the different world religions.

Second, spirit sometimes means the collective human mind in contrast to the individual human mind. This is the distinction between what Hegel refers to as "subjective" and "objective spirit." We can understand people on their own in the field of psychology, or we can understand people in the context of their relations to and interactions with others in fields such as sociology, ethics, law, and politics. Likewise, when we do history we are concerned not so much about specific individuals as about entire nations or peoples. Thus it is natural for us to speak of the *spirit* of a people.

Finally, the concept of spirit has special connotations in the Christian tradition. The third member of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, sometimes referred to as the Holy Ghost. This is thought to be the spirit of Christ in the living Christian community. The Holy Spirit is thought to facilitate belief and to be instrumental in conversion. Hegel enjoys playing on the different meanings of this term, and the association of it with this key Christian doctrine is of special importance to him.

1.1. RELIGION AND HISTORY

For Hegel, religion operates at the level of spirit. The conceptions of the gods are the product of the collective human mind and not the idiosyncratic result of the thought of specific individuals. Because of this, the different religions follow national lines, and specific peoples have specific gods. Thus Hegel's account of religion follows a pattern similar to his account of history. When tracing the account of the divine generally, one must explore it in specific historical peoples. The dialectic of recognition is also relevant for this historical dimension. Hegel states the matter perhaps most straightforwardly in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. He begins with the most basic question about what God or the divine is. The story of recognition is usually understood

to be a dynamic relation between two individuals. But when we are talking about God, this is a relation that pertains not just to specific individuals but to entire peoples since each people has its own religion and its own conception of the divine. Hegel understands the divine to be the characteristic representation of the spirit of a specific people. He explains:

Religion is the sphere in which a nation gives itself the definition of that which it regards as the true. A definition contains everything that belongs to the essence of an object; reducing its nature to its simple characteristic predicate, as a mirror for every predicate—the generic soul pervading all its details. The conception of God, therefore, constitutes the general basis of a people's character.⁵

Here it is clear that the specific conception of the divine, and thus the specific religion, is inextricably bound up with the nature of the people and their specific culture and stage of historical development. The notion of the divine that a people develops is naturally a result of its own values, culture, and self-conception. It is the highest and grandest that a given people can conceive. He continues:

This spirit of a people is a *determinate* and particular spirit, and is . . . further modified by the degree of its historical development. This spirit, then, constitutes the basis and substance of those other forms of a nation's consciousness, which have been noticed. For spirit in its self-consciousness must become an object of contemplation to itself, and objectivity involves in the first instance, the rise of differences which make up a total of distinct spheres of objective spirit. . . . It is thus one individuality which, presented in its essence as God, is honored and enjoyed in religion.⁶

It is uncontroversial to say that the different aspects of the culture of a specific people will be a reflection of the nature of that people. From this it follows, according to Hegel, that the conception of the divine, which indeed constitutes a part of culture, will likewise be a reflection of that people. Through their different cultural artifacts a people objectifies to itself what it is. It presents itself to itself in the form of an other. Its conception of the divine is one such artifact.

For Hegel, the gods exist vis-à-vis their followers. It does not make sense to talk about Zeus without the Greeks or Anubis without the Egyptians. In their forms of worship and conceptions of the divine, people recognize the gods as particular kinds of beings, and this is a function of the nature of the

⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 50; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 84f. See also VG, p. 105: "Religion is a people's consciousness of that which it is, of the existence of the highest. This knowledge is the universal essence. Just as a people represents God, so also does it represent its relationship to God, or so does it represent itself. Thus religion is the concept a people has of its own nature. A people that takes nature for its god cannot be free; only when it takes God to be a spirit above nature does it itself become spirit and free."

⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 53; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 87f.

people themselves. Thus the gods in a sense are a reflection of the people who worship them, just as in the dialectic of recognition the master is a reflection of a specific role vis-à-vis the slave. The two are closely and, for Hegel, necessarily connected. There cannot be a master without a slave, and vice versa. So also a specific kind of people will produce a specific kind of god that reflects that people's self-conception and that it can worship in its own specific manner in accordance with its culture.

The nature of the individual gods tells us about the nature of the people that worships them. In an agricultural society, it is natural that the deities be entities concerned with agriculture: the sun, the rain, planting, harvesting, fertility, etc. It is natural for such a society to worship their deities outdoors, perhaps at an altar, since the gods are conceived to be dwelling outdoors. By contrast, an urban society will come to regard this conception of the divine as unworthy. In such a setting, powerful and wealthy individuals are seen as living in grand villas and palaces. By comparison it seems absurd to think of a god living outdoors. Thus such city dwellers will naturally attempt to create a grand palace for their gods, a temple. This is the proper domicile for the gods of spirit. It is clear that the conception of the divine is dependent upon the cultural and historical level of development of a people. If the thought of a god is the highest and grandest that the human mind can imagine, this is not something that is fixed and forever static. The human imagination continually grows and expands to make room for ever richer and grander conceptions of the divine.

From this analysis it becomes clear why Hegel believes that a historical study of the concrete religions is important. He explains that the goal is to study the religions in history to see (1) how the different historical peoples knew and characterized their divinities, and (2) how they conceived of themselves, that is, what they thought it was to be human. Since the conception of the divine reflects and corresponds to a people's conception of itself, it is clear that this self-conception is historically mutable. This means that in order to understand it, one must trace its development. According to Hegel, history consists of a series of individual cultures and peoples as they develop through time. These can be studied individually, and thus one can learn and understand much about specific peoples, such as the Chinese, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, etc. But, for Hegel, the true philosophical approach to history means not seeing this as a series of isolated episodic stories of individual peoples but rather grasping the whole as an organic development that includes all of the peoples of the world. Historical development thus connects the individual cultures and time periods into a broader understanding, which provides an overview of human development as such and not just the development of a specific people. Similarly, when we investigate religion, we can look at specific religions on their own individually, but Hegel's view is that they all constitute a single developing religion. Just as humanity develops

historically, so also do the religions of the world develop in parallel to the other cultural and historical changes. This means that in order to understand religion in general we must look at the development of religion in time. Similarly, in order to understand religion today, we must examine how the different religions of the world gradually led to the religious intuitions that we have at present.

The well-known thesis of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* is that human history is the story of the peoples of the world striving towards freedom. Of course, the key question here is what he means by "freedom." According to Hegel, at the beginning of history individuals were subordinated to traditional values and customs. In the past many traditional practices were oppressive since the interests and desires of the individual were not thought to have any meaning. People were simply expected to conform to what was expected of them by their family, their caste, their clan, their tribe, etc. It was these groups which determined, for example, whom one would marry, what profession one would enter, and other key aspects of life. The personal desires or wishes of the individual were not recognized as having any value or validity in this context. In the early stages of human history there was little room for individuals to make their own decisions and develop their abilities in accordance with their own wishes. According to Hegel, the principle of "subjective freedom" slowly developed such that it was gradually realized that each and every human being is valuable and important on his or her own. A realm of individuality and subjectivity thus slowly opened up and came to be recognized in the course of history.

The long story that Hegel wants to tell about the development of subjective freedom in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* is intimately connected with the parallel story that he wants to tell about the development of the world religions in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. The culture and self-conception of a people are limited by the degree of freedom that it has obtained. Since this culture and self-conception is constitutive of the conception of the divine in any given people, it follows that the notion of freedom is also necessarily bound up with the way in which the gods are conceived. In short, the conception of the divine is necessarily connected to the level of freedom that a historical people has achieved.

Hegel takes this insight and attempts to reconstruct the history of this development. He starts with the most basic, earliest conception of the divine, and works his way through increasingly sophisticated versions until he reaches what he regards to be the then current conception. This account implies that the further one goes back in history, the less freedom there was, and this is reflected in the conceptions of the divine:

The principle by which God is defined for human beings is also the principle for how humanity defines itself inwardly or for humanity in its own spirit. An

inferior god or a nature god has inferior, natural and unfree human beings as its correlates; the pure concept of God or the spiritual God has as its correlate spirit that is free and spiritual, that actually knows God.⁷

Here Hegel makes it clear that the development of the conceptions of the different deities in the history of the world religions is characterized by an increase in the realization of freedom. This development, he believes, culminates in Christianity, which for the first time fully recognizes the true value of the individual and thus realizes subjective freedom.

The movement towards human freedom also implies a development of human self-consciousness. The highest form of recognition among equals is something that requires a course of development among individuals and societies. Likewise, the form of recognition between the gods and human beings also undergoes a course of development along the same lines. Only when the gods are conceived in a way that reflects human freedom and subjectivity can the development of religion be said to have reached its culmination. The goal that is realized in Christianity is a conception of a free God for free human beings.

With regard to the historical development of religion, in order to conceive of a self-conscious deity, one must be oneself a self-conscious individual. At the early stages of religion, individuals have still not discovered in themselves anything higher than what they have in common with nature. Since at such an early stage they have no higher spiritual principle in themselves, they cannot posit anything higher in the sphere of the divine.

The conception of the divine is just one aspect of spirit. It is thus closely related to the other aspects of culture and advances historically with them. A people's conception of ethics, government, and art changes in step with their conception of the divine. Once again it is clear that the individual parts of Hegel's thought cannot be separated from one another. All of the complex elements of spirit are intertwined. An understanding of the divine implies an understanding of an entire culture with all of its customs, institutions, etc. Thus the story about the development of religion that Hegel wants to tell is intimately bound up with the story of the development of history and specifically human freedom. Only when humans arrive at a point where they have truly achieved freedom will they be able to reach a complete and satisfactory conception of the divine.

One lesson that was learned from the lordship and bondage dialectic was that in order for one person to be free, that person must recognize others as free. Things like love, respect, friendship, and loyalty only make sense when they are freely given. As tyrants fail to understand, if such things are the result of force or coercion, then they mean nothing. If I wish to be loved or respected,

⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 515; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 413.

I must extend the freedom to other people to grant this to me of their own volition. In this way my freedom is dependent on the freedom of others. In order to flourish as human beings, we must allow everyone else to enjoy freedom as well. Freedom implies living together with other free agents in a wider context: "For only free persons can allow the external world, other human beings, and natural things to confront them freely. But for the one who is not free, others are not free either."⁸ Thus for God to be conceived as having inwardness and subjectivity, humans must have inwardness and subjectivity. People cannot objectify these qualities to themselves and ascribe them to divinities if they do not have them themselves.

The true philosophical stance is one that sees the different world religions in their historical development. When one sees and understands each religion in its own place and time, one can begin to discern its *logos* and rationality. By this we mean basic patterns or structures which are not found in nature but rather issue from the human mind. In this context the key pattern is the gradual development of human subjectivity and freedom. This historical element is thus key for understanding Hegel's defense of religion as something rational: "The process displayed in history is only the manifestation of religion as human reason—the production of the religious principle which dwells in the heart of man under the form of secular freedom."⁹ Like all the other aspects of human culture, religion, as a product of the human mind, displays a deep rationality, despite all immediate appearances to the contrary. The way in which this rationality can best be discerned is by reconstructing the history of the world's religions and placing each belief system in its proper place. In this way its unique role can become apparent and its rationality clear.

1.2. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE *LECTURES* ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

The understanding of the nature of religion and its relation to history determines Hegel's organization of the material in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. The key to understanding Hegel's metaphysics and speculative methodology lies in what he calls the Concept or Notion (*Begriff*). As an idealist, Hegel believes that the world or reality is constituted by the Concept.¹⁰

⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 539; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 437.

⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 335; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 429.

¹⁰ Hegel, *EL*, § 160, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 353: "The general standpoint of the Concept is indeed that of Absolute Idealism, and philosophy is conceptually comprehensive cognition, insofar as everything which in other forms of consciousness counts as something that is—and because it is immediate, as independent—is known within the Concept simply as an ideal moment."

But instead of being a single static thing, it is dynamic, consisting of a three-step movement: "The Concept as such contains the moment of *universality*, as free with itself in its determinacy; it contains the moment of *particularity*, or of the determinacy in which the universal remains serenely equal to itself, and it contains the moment of *singularity*, as the inward reflection of the determinacies of universality and particularity."¹¹ At first glance this sounds profoundly abstract. But in fact it captures something that is intuitive to everyone. The two main cognitive faculties that we use to understand the world are thought and sense perception. Through thought we grasp the universal, that is, abstract concepts: truth, beauty, honesty, etc. Through perception we have access to the infinite world of particular things since every perception or representation is absolutely unique. We then compare our experience of the particulars to the universal ideas that we have, and this results in the third step, which Hegel calls "singularity" or "individuality" (*Einzelheit*), that is, a particular that falls under a universal, for example, a particular statement is true, or a particular person is honest. The human mind is constantly making judgments of this sort that combine a universal with a particular.

One might also think of this as the basic structure of all science. Each of the sciences aims to explore some specific realm of empirical phenomena, that is, of particulars. It attempts to explain that realm by means of scientific laws or theories, that is, universals. The interface between these two is always the key to the success of the scientific field, and the universal theories are constantly being modified based on an increasing understanding of the nature of the particulars in the field of study. Thus, for Hegel, the Concept, as this dynamic movement that involves the key cognitive faculties, is what is both the truth of the world and the way that the human mind works. Speculative philosophy aims to understand this dynamic movement as a whole and not just specific aspects individually.

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel makes use of this general structure to understand religion. In his eyes religion is no different from any other field, and thus it should be approached in the same way.¹² Hegel thus applies his speculative methodology to the subject matter of religion. His approach is to see this material in terms of the three different aspects of the Concept: universality, particularity, and their unity in individuality or singularity.

At first, the lectures will explore the *universal aspect*, namely, the concept of religion or of the divine generally without any specific reference to individual religions. In this sense all religions are treated in terms of one single general concept: the divine. What is established is an abstract concept of the divine, and just like other concepts such as truth, beauty, and justice, it sets a standard

¹¹ Hegel, *EL*, § 163; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 358.

¹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 141; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 55. *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 174; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 83.

for concrete instances to match.¹³ An adequate conception of the divine implies this absolute claim to truth. The goal is to explore this concept. This is the object of the first section of the lectures, "The Concept of Religion."

Second, the lectures will turn to the *particular*, namely, the concrete, actual religions that have existed in history. This takes place in the second section of his lectures entitled "determinate religion." According to this view, there are different historical peoples, which each has its own history, but these can also be taken collectively as a general historical development. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel says:

Insofar as it is determinate and has not yet traversed the circuit of its determinations, with the result that it is finite religion and exists as finite, religion is *historical* and is a *particular shape* of religion. By indicating, in the series of stages, the principal moments in the development of religion, how these stages also exist in a historical manner, I will in effect be furnishing a single sequence of configurations, or a history of religion.¹⁴

This historical understanding of religion can be considered from two perspectives.¹⁵ Religion can be regarded in terms of its particular determinate religions, each of which has its own specific conception of the divine. But it can also be conceived as a whole with all the individual religions making up its constitutive parts. When the matter is seen in this way, there is only a single conception of the divine that continues to develop historically by means of the different world religions.¹⁶ This view can be seen as analogous to Hegel's conception of history. One can conceive of history as the field that studies the individual peoples and nations of the world individually, but, according to Hegel, the true speculative philosophy of history understands the development of the concept of freedom through all of the nations.

This third and final stage represents *the unity of universal and particular* in the individual or the singular. Finally, the universal and the particular will be united in a third element which is the particular religion that corresponds to the concept of religion established in the first part. This place is occupied

¹³ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 415; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 524: "What is posited is only the *concept* of religion; in this the essence is self-consciousness, which is conscious of being all truth and contains all reality within that truth. This self-consciousness has, as consciousness, itself for object."

¹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 183; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 91.

¹⁵ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 413f.; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 522: "The genesis of religion *in general* is contained in the movement of the universal moments. But since each of these attributes was exhibited, not merely as it determines itself in general, but as it is in and for itself, i.e., as it runs its course as a totality within itself, therefore, what has come to be is not merely the genesis of religion *in general*: those complete processes of the individual aspects at the same time contain the specific forms of religion itself."

¹⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 417; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 526: "The series of different religions which will come to view, just as much sets forth again only the different aspects of a *single* religion, and, moreover, of every single religion, and the ideas which seem to distinguish one actual religion from another occur in each one."

by Christianity, which, Hegel thinks, represents the conception of the divine that is adequate to the concept. Thus the third part of Hegel's lectures is called "The Absolute Religion" or "The Consummate Religion." In the context of the historical development, of all the world religions it is only Christianity that, according to Hegel, contains a full and adequate conception of human freedom.

This general methodological statement about the speculative study of religion makes it clear right from the start how important determinate religion is for Hegel. It is a necessary part in the speculative methodology which serves to demonstrate the truth of the third and final stage. Without this second part, one would be left with only the abstract concept of religion and nothing more. But in order to understand and evaluate this concept fully, it is necessary to see the historical instantiations of it. Determinate religion, as the minor premise in the syllogism, is absolutely essential for deriving the conclusion. Only in this way is it possible to demonstrate the truth and validity of Christianity, the conclusion which completes the triad. So the goal of the analysis will be to trace the different inadequate forms of religion in order to reach the one which corresponds to the essence or concept of religion. Each step in the development of the world's religions represents a higher level that overcomes previous contradictions and shortcomings. But since all the different religions contain a certain conception of the divine, they can be conceived as a single developing system and studied as an organic unity. Thus, instead of talking about Anubis, Zeus, or Aphrodite, we can simply talk about the divine in general.

1.3. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE DETERMINATE RELIGION

Hegel gave lecture courses on the philosophy of religion four times in Berlin. The basic structure of these lectures, despite many differences in the details, follows the threefold scheme outlined in the previous section: "The Concept of Religion," "Determinate Religion," and "The Consummate Religion." Hegel divides the world religions into three large stages: the natural religions, the religions of spirit, and finally the consummate religion or Christianity.¹⁷ The first two of these fall under the rubric of "determinate religion," and each contains a series of individual religions. Each of the world religions is determined and organized in accordance with its conception of the divine.

¹⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 93–8; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 1–4. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 233–8; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 139–44. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 513–21; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 411–19.

The movement that Hegel traces is intended to be a progressive one, leading from the most basic to the most sophisticated.

In the first category, natural religion, the divine is conceived as an object of nature or as something continuous with it. The divine entity is a thing or substance and not a self-conscious agent.¹⁸ Natural religion begins with an account of magic, which, strictly speaking, is not a religion at all due to reasons that will be explored below. After magic there are the three Eastern religions, namely, the Chinese religion, Hinduism, and Buddhism-Lamaism (which are treated together). Finally, there are the three transitional religions: Zoroastrianism, the Syrian religion, and the Egyptian religion.¹⁹ A skeleton of this basic outline of the account given in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is already present in the "Religion" chapter of the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel's treatment is confined to Zoroastrianism ("God as Light"), Hinduism ("Plant and Animal"), and the Egyptian religion ("The Artificer"). Since the religious believer is related to an object here (an object of nature), this is the level of consciousness.²⁰ In his different lectures Hegel does occasionally modify the order in which he treats the different religions. These modifications and the possible reasons for them will be discussed in the course of the analyses below.

The second stage is the "Religion of Spiritual Individuality or Free Subjectivity," where the divine is conceived as a self-conscious entity.²¹ This stage includes Judaism ("The Religion of Sublimity"), Greek polytheism ("The Religion of Beauty"), and Roman polytheism ("The Religion of Expediency"). In the *Phenomenology* Hegel treats only the Greek religion and has no corresponding analysis of Judaism or the Roman religion in the "Religion" chapter, although scattered traces of these religions do appear in other parts of the work. Here the religious believer sees in the divine not an object or thing but another self-conscious being, and so this represents the level of self-consciousness.²² Also here Hegel occasionally changes the order of his treatment of the different

¹⁸ In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel describes this as follows: "The first reality of Spirit is . . . religion as *immediate*, and therefore natural religion. In this, Spirit knows itself as its object in a natural or immediate shape" (*PhS*, p. 416; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 525).

¹⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, p. 265; *Jub.*, vol. 15, p. 275. It should be noted that Hegel only added the section on the Syrian religion or "The Religion of Anguish" in the lectures for 1831, and this account remains undeveloped. For this reason it will not be treated here. See Hegel, *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 82–5; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 434–7. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 743; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 629. See also the editorial note: *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 454–5n.

²⁰ See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 173; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 108: "First we had *nature religion*, i.e., religion from the standpoint of *consciousness* alone."

²¹ Hegel introduces this as follows in the *Phenomenology*: "The second reality, however, is necessarily that in which Spirit knows itself in the shape of a *superseded* natural existence, or of the self" (*PhS*, p. 416; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 525).

²² See *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 173; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 108: "The second form was that of *spiritual religion*, but it was the religion of the spirit that remains finitely determined; to this extent it is the religion of *self-consciousness*."

religions; in particular he toys with the correct placement of Judaism in the grand scheme of the world religions. With the Roman religion the sequence of determinate religions comes to a close.

This leads to the third section of Hegel's lectures, "The Absolute Religion" or "The Consummate Religion," namely, Christianity. This does not fall under the rubric of determinate religion but rather is separated from the determinate religions and constitutes a category unto itself. Christianity unites the first two parts of the lectures, namely, the "Concept of Religion" and "Determinate Religion." It is in the concrete historical religion of Christianity that the abstract concept of the true religion is realized in actuality. All of the previous religions treated in the "Determinate Religion" fall short of attaining the complete concept and are thus all in some way defective. Hegel also refers to Christianity as the "religion of freedom."²³ It is only in Christianity that subjective freedom is truly realized; again all of the previous religions fall short of the complete development of human freedom.

Despite this schematic overview, we should resist the temptation to regard Hegel's account of the history of religion as a simplistic, one-dimensional, linear development. Hegel is well aware of the complexity of the development of religious thinking, and he acknowledges that these belief systems arise over long periods of time, which sometimes overlap with one another. Moreover, it would be a mistake to take Hegel's individual analyses as one-to-one accounts of individual religions.²⁴ For example, as will be seen in Chapter 3 below, in his analysis of the Chinese religion Hegel in fact discusses a number of different religious traditions, including Taoism, Confucianism, and the state religion of the Zhou Dynasty. Similarly, his accounts of Buddhism and Hinduism cover a wide variety of beliefs and practices that need to be sorted out individually. Thus it is probably better just to take Hegel's overview as a general didactical guide but not to insist on it too rigidly. Likewise, it is probably better to conceive of his accounts as treating general representative ways of religious thinking and not as straightforward reflections of specific historical religions.

As has been noted, the important role of the "Determinate Religion" section has never been fully appreciated. It will be demonstrated here that Hegel's accounts of the different world religions found there are absolutely essential for understanding his defense of Christianity. According to his

²³ Ibid.: "The third form . . . is the religion of freedom, the religion of the self-consciousness (or of the consciousness) that is self-contained, for in it there is equally both the objectivity of spirit and the freedom of self-possession: this is its definition of consciousness. Freedom is the true definition of self-consciousness."

²⁴ This has been persuasively pointed out in Thomas A. Lewis' outstanding article, "Hegel's Determinate Religion Today: Foreign yet Not So Far Away," in *Religion und Religionen im Deutschen Idealismus. Schleiermacher—Hegel—Schelling*, ed. by Friedrich Hermann, Burkhard Nonnenmacher, and Friedrike Schick, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2015, pp. 211–31.

view, Christianity is the result of a long historical process by which both the human spirit and the conception of the divine develop in parallel. Only by understanding this development (and thus the religions of the world) can we understand the true and unique nature of Christianity.

Today the existence of the multitude of different religions is often taken to be an argument for religious relativism: since there are so many different religious beliefs all claiming to be true and all contradicting each other, there can be no final truth in the sphere of religion. Or, put differently, all religions are false. But Hegel's intuition is quite different. The existence of the different religions of the world is a natural result of the historical development that human beings have gone through. Just as there have been different forms of art, government, and philosophy in the different peoples of the world, so also have there been different religious practices and conceptions of the divine. But this does not undermine their truth value. As products of the human mind and human culture, all of these things have truth and validity when they are seen in their proper historical context. Thus if one can understand the process of historical development, then one can appreciate the truth of specific beliefs and practices that emerge historically and that are still with us today.

Hegel therefore attempts to trace the different forms and conceptions of the divine that have appeared through history. He organizes the sequence of the different world religions by means of a number of different criteria. The obvious and primary criterion is that he believes that the movement is one from less developed to more developed. In other words, the concept of the divine begins as basic and rudimentary, like the cultures they reflect, and then develops to higher levels of complexity and sophistication. According to Hegel's way of thinking, the story of human development is the story of human liberation from nature. We are natural beings born into the world surrounded by other natural beings. Only in the course of time does the human race develop culture and gradually move away from its original dependence on nature and create a new sphere where it is truly at home: "spirit." Thus human beings must rise above their purely natural state and overcome their immediate drives and impulses to become spirit. The development of religion runs parallel to this development, where the human mind takes its leave of nature. When humans live immersed in nature, it is understandable that their gods will be likewise associated with nature. But as people begin to emancipate themselves from nature, they develop a new conception of themselves as spirit, something higher than nature, and only once this has been achieved can they conceive of the divine as spirit.

Another key criterion is that of recognition or its negative pendant alienation. At first, when humans are living in the realm of nature without any further development, the gods are conceived as objects of nature. But humans are, in Hegel's language, implicitly spirit, that is, self-conscious entities who are higher than nature. Thus the natural divinities are entities from which

humans are alienated. The divine are conceived as frightening, violent, and unpredictable creatures, indifferent to human interests and welfare. The gods are radically distinct and other. This is the sphere of the religions of nature. But as culture develops and humans begin to emancipate themselves from nature, they begin to gain a conception of themselves as being invested with something higher. Humans gradually become aware of themselves as spirit. As human beings become self-conscious, they require the recognition of another who is equal and free. Natural entities are unworthy of giving this kind of recognition. Thus the divine must have a human form. Subsequently, people begin to conceive of the divine as spirit, that is, as having human characteristics and interests as in the Greek or Roman religions. But these conceptions are never wholly human, and for this reason humans still feel a degree of alienation from them. Only in Christianity do the divine and the human come together in Christ. With Christ the story of alienation of the different forms of the world religions comes to an end. In Christ humans can recognize another human being. But yet this human being is divine, and so humans likewise recognize a spark of the divine in themselves. One finds oneself and is at home in the divine other. There is thus a teleology in the movement: away from nature and towards spirit, and away from alienation and towards recognition and reconciliation.

Perhaps the most important criterion is that of freedom, or more specifically the development of the conception of the individual. As human beings gradually liberate themselves from nature, they come to understand themselves as having a special truth and value. According to Hegel's view, ancient cultures tend to be oppressive since they do not recognize individuals as having any rights or value on their own. Instead, the characteristic of ancient culture is the tyrannical rule of custom. Things are the way they are since they were determined by nature to be so, and the personal opinion of the individual does not count for anything in this context. With the rise of Roman law individuals were widely granted specific rights as citizens, but this was still far from a complete conception of freedom in Hegel's eyes since many people, such as slaves, were excluded from citizenship rights, and the Roman emperor was above the law and could violate the rights of specific individuals at will. Only with the development of the individual in Christianity does the idea appear that every human being—slave, foreigner, or citizen—has a unique and irreducible value in themselves. Every human being has been created in God's image and has something divine in them. The development of this principle of subjective freedom can also be traced in the different conceptions of the divine in which it is reflected. To be free one must recognize others as free. The gods in the earlier religions are portrayed as tyrannical or indifferent to human needs and interests. Only in Christianity does humanity arrive at a free and loving God recognizing a free humanity.

1.4. THE RISE OF ORIENTALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century was a dynamic period in European cultural and religious thinking since it was the time when Europe came into contact with and gained a deeper appreciation for a series of non-European cultures and religions. This was a period that saw if not the birth of, then a radical surge of interest in Orientalism.²⁵ Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign (1798–1801) marked the beginning of Egyptology as a science, and the discovery of the Rosetta Stone proved to be the key for the deciphering of the hieroglyphics. Through contact with the Ottoman Empire in Central Europe and the Balkans, Islam took on great importance in the European mind, and this in turn facilitated the development of Islamic Studies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Around this same time British colonial administrators began to explore the culture and religion of India; British and German scholars translated Sanskrit texts into European languages for the first time. Studies on the ancient Persian language and religion also became popular during this period. The spread of the Haskalah movement or Jewish Enlightenment created new possibilities for dialogue between Christian and Jewish intellectuals. Sinology was the only field of Asian Studies to have begun significantly earlier than this period. Primarily through the work of Jesuit missionaries, Europe had been introduced to Buddhism and Taoism of ancient China as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and controversies about these religions were an important part of the landscape of the Enlightenment.

This scholarly interest was accompanied by a broader, more popular one that touched many aspects of society. In the seventeenth century there was a great European fascination with China, which included the importation of Chinese porcelain, silk, furniture, and paintings as well as the imitation of Chinese teahouses and pagodas. A similar movement arose with the intellectual discovery of India in the second half of the eighteenth century, which resulted in an Indomania primarily in Britain and the German states. Napoleon's conscious propaganda efforts in connection with the Egyptian campaign resulted in a

²⁵ See Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010. Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism*, Philadelphia and Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press 2010. Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007. Douglas T. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany*, Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2009. Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, New York: Columbia University Press 1984.

European-wide Egyptomania that set off a race for the plundering of ancient treasures. The influx of new styles and ideas from the East became a fascination to the European mind before and during Hegel's lifetime. This is reflected in many different fields such as architecture, music, painting, and theater.²⁶ Sphinxes and lotus flowers began to appear as motifs in European paintings. Thomas Phillips' famous portrait of Lord Byron from 1814 shows the young poet wearing an exotic, distinctively oriental-looking outfit. Orientalism also made an impact on literature led by the first European translation of *A Thousand and One Nights*.²⁷ Other well-known examples of this influence include Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), Voltaire's *Zadig, or The Book of Fate* (1747), Samuel Johnson's *History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759), Hölderlin's *Hyperion* (1797–9), Novalis' *Hymns to the Night* (1800), Oehlenschläger's *Aladdin* (1805), Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* (1816), Byron's Oriental romances, *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), *The Giaour* (1813), *The Corsair* (1813), *Lara* (1814), and *The Siege of Corinth* (1816), Shelley's *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude* (1816), Keats' *Endymion* (1818), and Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* (1819).²⁸

These developments raised new challenges for traditional Christian belief that was still reeling from the criticisms issued by the Enlightenment. When the importance of other religious traditions began to be appreciated, Christianity's absolute claim to truth seemed to be made problematic. Many of the major philosophers, theologians, and writers of the day were profoundly influenced by this new wealth of information. Figures such as Leibniz, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche were eager to co-opt elements of Eastern religion in their own thinking. Herder and Friedrich von Schlegel tried to create theories of historical and cultural development that included these other traditions. Writers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Goethe used the Oriental perspective to develop cultural criticism of European beliefs, practices, and values.

²⁶ See, for example, Lynne Thornton, *Les Orientalistes: Peintres voyageurs, 1828–1908*, trans. by Jean de la Hogue, Paris: ACR Édition Internationale 1983. John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 1995. Jean Alazard, *L'Orient et la peinture française aux XIXe siècle*, Paris: Librairie Plon 1930. Mildred Archer and Ronald Lightbown, *India Observed: India as Viewed by British Artists 1760–1860*, London: Victoria and Albert Museum 1982. Roger Bezombes, *L'Exotisme dans l'Art et la Pensée*, Paris et al.: Elsevier 1953. Philippe Jullian, *The Orientalists: European Painters of Eastern Scenes*, trans. by Helga and Dinah Harrison, Oxford: Phaidon 1977. Patrick Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West*, London: Thames and Hudson 1979. James Thompson, *The East: Imagined, Experienced, Remembered: Orientalist Nineteenth-Century Painting*, Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland 1988.

²⁷ *Les mille et une nuits, contes arabes traduits en français*, vols 1–12, trans. by Antoine Galland, Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin 1704–17. (Note that the first seven volumes were published in Paris by "la Veuve Claude Barbin," while subsequent volumes were published at different publishing houses.)

²⁸ See John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 1987.

The effects of Orientalism for the perception of the absolute status of Christianity were particularly important. It had been an unquestioned assumption that the writings of the Old Testament were the oldest religious documents, representing humanity's original, primeval religion, but with the European discovery of the *Vedas*, the *Tao-te ching* and the *I Ching*, this was suddenly called into question. The antiquity of Chinese religious thinking was particularly troublesome for the Jesuit missionaries in China. One attempt to resolve the matter was to claim that the ancient Chinese were in fact the first monotheists, who were later corrupted by their contact with India. This eventually led to the distortion of the ancient monotheism as it spread throughout Asia. In this way one could celebrate the importance of Chinese religion as a forerunner of Judaism and Christianity. Scholars thus sought in the *Tao-te ching* and the *I Ching* traces of monotheism. This view was useful to the missionaries since it meant that their job was simply to revive an old doctrine that had once existed but had later become corrupted. But one result was the general conception that the Chinese religion was a confused, distorted, and superstitious matter.²⁹ (A similar attempt was made to see ancient Hinduism as an early form of monotheism that later degenerated.)³⁰

The opposing view in this controversy made no attempt to compromise but rather insisted on the exclusive role of the Old Testament as the first true documentation of the divine revelation via the Jews. Thus despite whatever vestiges of monotheism could be found in other religions, the truth of the Judeo-Christian tradition remained secure. Debates such as this show the worries that the new research in Orientalism brought to traditional religion. For the figures of the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire and Diderot, this was grist for the mill to undermine the authority of the Church and the clergy.³¹ The idea of a radically different culture and religion was used by the Enlightenment thinkers as a way in which to criticize traditional religious belief. This new perspective allowed them to sing the praises of certain aspects of other religions while criticizing Christianity.³² The growing awareness of other religions with in part overlapping ideas gave rise to a more general, more abstract conception of the divine that stood above the different religions and was shared by them. This view accorded with that of the Deists, who were keen to establish a conception of the divine that was free of all anthropomorphic qualities.

The rise of Orientalism also went hand-in-hand with German Romanticism and indeed can be said to be a constitutive part of it. It is thus no accident that the German Romantics played an important role in the discovery of

²⁹ For this controversy see Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism*, pp. 28ff.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 45ff. ³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37f.

³² See Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 2007, pp. 116–17.

Eastern cultures,³³ making particularly significant contributions in Indology.³⁴ The Romantics rejected the Enlightenment appeal to sterile reason and understanding; instead, they were attracted to intuition, feeling, and emotion, which seemed to have no place in the modern world. Moreover, they were captivated by the exotic nature of Eastern religion, which appeared to be the very opposite of the dry, well-trodden European culture. Thus the fascination with ancient India was more than simply an academic curiosity about newly discovered material, but rather it seemed to provide the key for a regeneration of modern European culture. Rousseau had criticized modern society of the eighteenth century as decadent, corrupt, and hypocritical, and had posited a pristine state of nature, where humans lived more fully in their original condition before the negative effects of society had arisen. To the minds of the Romantics, ancient India potentially offered a picture of an authentic, original human life and society before greed, flattery, gluttony, and hypocrisy destroyed the best parts of human nature. The arguments being made at the time for the connection between European languages and Sanskrit (as well as the connection between Hinduism and the religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans) suggested the idea of a cultural continuity between modern Europe and ancient India, a connection which could perhaps be recovered. So the key to the spiritual renewal of Europe was thought to lie in the recovery of the culture of ancient India. These connections tracing a link between European culture and that of ancient India account in part for the enormous interest in that country during the nineteenth century. While European scholars had been studying the culture of ancient China since the sixteenth century, the results of their efforts were comparatively muted. There was nothing to link China to European culture, and so interest in Chinese culture and religion remained more of an academic *curiosum*.

There was also an important political dimension to the rise of Indology in the German-speaking world at this time.³⁵ This was the period of the

³³ See Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 2004. *Der Deutschen Morgenland. Bilder des Orients in der deutschen Literatur und Kultur von 1770 bis 1850*, ed. by Charis Goer and Michael Hofmann, Munich: Wilhelm Fink 2008. Sabine Mangold, *Eine "weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft"—Die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich: Franz Steiner Verlag 2004. Norbert Nebes, "Orientalistik im Aufbruch. Die Wissenschaft vom Vorderen Orient in Jena zur Goethezeit," in *Goethes Morgenlandfahrten. West-östliche Begegnungen*, ed. by Jochen Golz, Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel 1999, pp. 66–96.

³⁴ As one scholar observes, "while England was the native land of Indic studies, the native land of the Indic Renaissance was Germany—first at Jena, Weimar and Heidelberg, then at Bonn, Berlin and Tübingen. During the 1790s the impact of oriental studies in Germany was like a rapid-fire series of explosions." See Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, p. 53.

³⁵ See Nicholas A. Germana, *The Orient of Europe: The Mythical Image of India and Competing Images of German National Identity*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009, pp. 2–3. A. Leslie Willson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism*, Durham: Duke University Press 1964, pp. 132–7.

Napoleonic wars and the humiliating French occupation of many German states. In this context it was natural that the question of German identity arose, which was already complicated due to the many different dialects of German and the political fragmentation in the German states. The linguistic link between Sanskrit and German offered a new possibility for German identity in contrast to the French occupiers, who self-consciously appropriated symbolism from Greek and Roman history for their cause. The image of an ancient ancestor to German language and culture in India offered a welcome tool for the rising German nationalism. In this way the Germans could also make a claim to have a distinguished ancient heritage that was different from and older than the French.³⁶ The discovery of India thus had both political and cultural implications since it made the Germans more receptive to certain aspects of Eastern culture than might otherwise have been the case.

It should, of course, be noted that the term "Orientalism" is a loaded one, and thus a word of caution is in order here. In his influential book *Orientalism*,³⁷ Edward W. Said called into question the traditional conception of the term as meaning simply the value-neutral quest for truth and knowledge in connection with the cultures of the East. He argued that these investigations constituted a part of a much larger imperial ambition to take over, not just politically but also spiritually, specific geographical regions, such as India, North Africa, and the Far East. Instead of being a disinterested search for truth, Orientalism rather aimed to produce an unfavorable picture of "the other" that would be useful to Europe's colonial interests. Orientalist scholars thus cultivated an image of the East as decadent, feeble-minded, and weak. Said's negative view of Orientalism has been polemically rejected by scholars like Robert Irwin, who claims that the early orientalists were driven by a genuine curiosity to learn and understand foreign cultures and not by some nefarious ideological agenda of colonialism.³⁸ While there have been detractors to Said's view, there can be no denying that it has made its mark on the discussion of this issue.

Hegel's role in this is also one that needs to be taken seriously and will be explored in detail in what follows. Indeed, Hegel in many ways represents an ambiguous position that can be seen to reflect both sides of the debate surrounding Said's work. On the one hand, in line with Said's general view,

³⁶ The interest in Orientalism among the German Romantics can thus be seen as a natural part of their general nationalist program, which also included an attempt to recover old German folk songs, folk tales, fairy tales, and cultural traditions that could be identified with a specific German national spirit.

³⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage 1978 (reprint: Harmondsworth: Penguin 2003).

³⁸ For example, Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies*. Other critics of Said include Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press 2007. Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books 2007.

Hegel's racist and Eurocentric proclivities have attracted critical attention in the secondary literature, and it is argued that these make his project utterly untenable today. On the other hand, in line with Said's critics, the rise of Orientalism was important for Hegel in that he realized that his analysis of religion would have to take into account a far wider spectrum of religions and religious experiences than had been done previously. In order to demonstrate the truth of Christianity, he would have to make a serious examination of the other world religions. Given the influx of material about Eastern religions, it would no longer do simply to ignore this as if it did not exist. Despite his pro-Christian agenda, Hegel took seriously other cultures and religions and defended the study of them against dismissive critics.³⁹ In an early fragment he discusses "the spirit of the orientals."⁴⁰ He speaks with real fascination about, for example, some aspects of the culture of ancient Persia and Egypt. Karl Rosenkranz states that in connection with his lectures, especially his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel developed "an interest for the study of the Orient," and he "cast himself into the study of oriental cultures with genuine enthusiasm and his usual persistence."⁴¹ Given this constellation of issues it should be readily apparent that Hegel's account of religion is by no means an arcane topic of purely historical interest. On the contrary, some of its key issues and problems are the very same ones that are being debated today.

1.5. CREUZER'S SYMBOLIK UND MYTHOLOGIE

One important figure in the context of the rise of Orientalism in the German states was Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858).⁴² In 1810–12 he published in

³⁹ See Ernst Schulin, *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1958. Reinhard Leuze, *Die außerchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1975 (*Theologie und Geistesgeschichte des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 14). Michel Hulin, *Hegel et l'orient, suivi de la traduction annotée d'un essai de Hegel sur la Bhagavad-Gita*, Paris: J. Vrin 1979. Frederick G. Whelan, "Hegel and the Orient," in his *Enlightenment Political Thought and Non-Western Societies: Sultans and Savages*, New York: Routledge 2009, pp. 130–63. Kurt F. Leidecker, "Hegel and the Orientals," in *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy*, ed. by Warren E. Steinkraus, New York et al.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1971, pp. 156–66. Hans Joachim Schoeps, "Die ausserchristlichen Religion bei Hegel," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1955, pp. 1–33. Gustav Mensching, "Typologie außerchristlicher Religion bei Hegel," *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft*, vol. 46, 1931, pp. 329–40. *Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions*, ed. by Bart Labuschagne and Timo Slootweg, Leiden and Boston: Brill 2012.

⁴⁰ Hegel, "Fragments of Historical Studies," *MW*, pp. 90–4; *Dokumente*, pp. 257–61.

⁴¹ Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1844, p. 378.

⁴² For Creuzer and his account of mythology, see René Gérard, *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, Nancy: Georges Thomas 1963, pp. 173–81. Conrad Bursian, *Geschichte der*

four volumes his groundbreaking *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*.⁴³ This work was expanded and printed in a second edition in 1819–21, which was accompanied by a separate volume of illustrations.⁴⁴ Hegel was familiar with both of these editions.⁴⁵ Creuzer's student Franz Joseph Mone (1796–1871) expanded the second edition with two more volumes from 1822 to 1823.⁴⁶ A third edition appeared from 1836–43 as a part of Creuzer's collected works.⁴⁷

Creuzer began his studies in Jena in the 1790s, where he made the acquaintance of the jurist Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779–1861), and the brothers Wilhelm (1786–1859) and Jacob Grimm (1785–1863). After finishing his degree, he received a position at the University of Marburg. In 1804 he was appointed to a professorship in philology and ancient history at the University of Heidelberg. There he met Johann Joseph von Görres (1776–1848), Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) and the brothers Friedrich (1772–1829) and August von Schlegel (1767–1845), who became known as the leading figures of Heidelberg Romanticism. Through his contact with these figures, Creuzer, although a classicist by training, became profoundly interested in the mythology of India and other Eastern religions. This was the beginning of the inspiration for his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker*.

Creuzer's approach to religion foreshadowed Hegel's in important ways. He saw a general development in the history of the different world religions,

classischen Philologie in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, vols 1–2, Munich and Leipzig: R. Oldenbourg 1883, vol. 1, pp. 562–87.

⁴³ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1810–12.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, 2nd fully revised edition, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819–21. *Abbildungen zu Friedrich Creuzers Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker. Auf sechzig Tafeln*, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819.

⁴⁵ In a letter to Creuzer from October 30, 1819, Hegel thanks him for sending a copy of the second edition of *Symbolik und Mythologie*, with which he is clearly very excited. See Hegel, *Letters*, pp. 449–51; *Briefe*, vol. 2, letter 359, pp. 217–20. See also *Hegel's Library*, entries 684–8, which refers to the four volumes of the second edition. Hegel also owned a copy of Creuzer's *Abriss der Römischen Antiquitäten*, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1824 (*Hegel's Library*, 683).

⁴⁶ *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, von Friedrich Creuzer, fortgesetzt von Dr. Franz Joseph Mone, Fünfter Theil, *Geschichte des nordischen Heidenthums*, and Sechster Theil, *Geschichte des nordischen Heidenthums*, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1822–3. Mone's work expanded on Creuzer's analysis by showing how the migrations of peoples brought the Hindu myths to northern Europe, where they developed into Norse mythology.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, 3rd improved edition, vols 1–4, Leipzig: Carl Wilhelm Leske 1836–43. The four volumes of this work constitute Part 1 of *Friedrich Creuzer's Deutsche Schriften*, Parts 1–5, neue und verbesserte, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1836–58. (Starting with Part 5, vol. 2, this work was published in Frankfurt am Main by Baer.)

whereby early stages developed into later, more complex ones. With his comparative mythology, Creuzer attempted to demonstrate that important aspects of Greek mythology originally came from Eastern sources like Egypt, Persia, and India. This seemed to undermine the importance and originality of Greek culture, which the traditionalists had long celebrated. This was a controversial claim at the time of neoclassicism and philhellenism in the German states. Creuzer's views seemed to undermine the superiority or primacy of Western culture and raise Eastern religion to a new, elevated status.

One particularly inflammatory claim was that the origins of Judaism and Christianity could be found in ancient India. Although it might appear at face value that Hinduism represents a polytheism, in fact, Creuzer claims, it is a monotheism since everything emanates from the god Brāhma. This deity was the forerunner of Yahweh or Jehovah of the Jews. Moreover, Creuzer associated the Christian Trinity with the Hindu conception of the threefold deity, Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva. In this way Hinduism was claimed to anticipate Christianity. The controversial inference from this was that Hinduism was the source of all subsequent religions and mythologies.

These claims set off a testy controversy that took place during the time when Hegel was lecturing in Berlin.⁴⁸ Creuzer's views were polemically rejected, and there were attempts to portray him as incompetent or fanatical. Classicists harbored great resentment against Creuzer since they believed he had betrayed his own background as a classical philologist, and thus his enthusiasm for the culture of ancient India was regarded as nothing short of treasonous. Among his critics were the philologist Gottfried Hermann (sometimes Herrmann) (1772–1848),⁴⁹ the Hellenist and pioneer in the field of Greek mythology, Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840),⁵⁰ and the classicist Christian Lobeck

⁴⁸ See Suzanne L. Marchand, "Orientalism and Classicism in the Wake of the Creuzer Streit," in her *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, pp. 66–71. Partha Mitter, "Creuzer and Hegel," in his *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions of Indian Art*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1977, pp. 202–20. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 96–101. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 159–66. For a useful overview of the materials, see Ernst Howald, *Der Kampf um Creuzers Symbolik*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1926.

⁴⁹ Gottfried Hermann and Friedrich Creuzer, *Briefe über Homer und Hesiodus vorzüglich über die Theogonie. (Mit besonderer Hinsicht auf des Ersteren Dissertatio de Mythologia Graecorum antiquissima und auf des Letzteren Symbolik und Mythologie der Griechen)*, Heidelberg: August Oswald's Universität-Buchhandlung 1818 (*Hegel's Library*, 790). See also Hermann's *Ueber das Wesen und Behandlung der Mythologie. Ein Brief an Herrn Hofrath Creuzer*, Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer d. Jüng. 1819.

⁵⁰ Karl Otfried Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1825. (In English as *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology*, trans. by John Leitch, London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans 1844.) See Josine H. Blok, "Quests for a Scientific Mythology: F. Creuzer and K.O. Müller on History and Myth," *History and Theory*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1994 (Theme Issue 33: Proof and Persuasion in History), pp. 26–52.

(1781–1860).⁵¹ However, the most dogged critic of Creuzer and his circle was Johann Heinrich Voss (1751–1826), an old, distinguished classicist and astute defender of the Enlightenment,⁵² who had won great acclaim for his German translation of Homer and later received a professorship at the University of Heidelberg. Voss was known as a tireless opponent of the Heidelberg group.⁵³ He began his criticism in 1821 with an article “Bewertung der Creuzerischen Symbolik,” which appeared in the *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*.⁵⁴ Creuzer responded with a brief pamphlet, *Vossiana*.⁵⁵ This initial exchange was the beginning of a critical campaign that Voss would pursue against Creuzer over the next several years.⁵⁶ In 1824 he mounted his most extended criticism with the publication of his *Antisymbolik* as a response to Creuzer and Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729–1812).⁵⁷ After Voss’ death in 1826, his son Abraham Voss published a second volume of this work, in which further attempts were made to develop arguments against Creuzer’s approach.⁵⁸ Hegel was familiar with these debates and expresses his support for Creuzer in a letter.⁵⁹

Voss deeply feared for what he regarded as the negative influences of the young Romantics on the impressionable students in Heidelberg. He disdained their interest in the Middle Ages, Catholicism, folk tales and folk songs, and their attempts to evoke thereby a German nationalism (in the face of the French occupation). As a classicist and Homer expert, he was outraged by the claims of Görres and Creuzer that the greatness of ancient Greek culture derived from ancient India. He regarded Creuzer’s argument that Dionysius was derived from Shiva as straightforwardly absurd. He was doubly outraged

⁵¹ Chr[istianus] August[us] Lobeck, *Aglaophamus sive De theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis libri tres*, vols 1–2, Königsberg: Borntraeger 1829 (*Hegel's Library*, 695–6).

⁵² See Wilhelm Herbst, *Johann Heinrich Voss*, vols 1–2, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner 1872–6. Hartmut Fröschle, *Der Spätaufklärer Johann Heinrich Voß als Kritiker der deutschen Romantik*, Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz 1985.

⁵³ See Jon Vanden Heuvel, *A German Life in the Age of Revolution: Joseph Görres, 1778–1848*, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press 2001, pp. 144ff. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 153ff.

⁵⁴ V. [Johann Heinrich Voss], “Leipzig u. Darmstadt, b. Heyer u. Leske: *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, von Dr. Friedrich Creuzer, Professor der alten Literatur zu Heidelberg. Zweyte völlig umgearbeitete Ausgabe. Erster Theil. Mit einem Hefte von Abbildungen und mit eingedruckten Holzschnitten. 1819. XXIV u. 799 S. Zweyter Theil. 1820. VI u. 1006 S. Dritter Theil. VI u. 579 S. 8,” *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 18. Jahrgang, vol. 2, May 1821, no. 81, columns 161–8; no. 82, columns 169–76; no. 83, columns 177–84; no. 84, columns 185–92; no. 85, columns 193–200; no. 86, columns 201–8; no. 87, columns 209–16.

⁵⁵ Friedrich Creuzer, *Vossiana mit Anmerkungen*, [no place or publisher] 1821.

⁵⁶ See Fröschle, *Der Spätaufklärer Johann Heinrich Voß als Kritiker der deutschen Romantik*, pp. 112–39.

⁵⁷ Johann Heinrich Voss, *Antisymbolik*, Stuttgart: Metzler 1824.

⁵⁸ Johann Heinrich Voss, *Antisymbolik*, vol. 2, Stuttgart: Metzler 1826.

⁵⁹ See Hegel, *Letters*, p. 467; *Briefe*, vol. 2, letter 389, p. 267. See also *Letters*, p. 502; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 472, p. 44. *Letters*, p. 701; *Briefe*, vol. 2, letter 393, p. 276. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 62.

by the attempt to connect German culture with that of India. Voss insisted that the origin of everything German was ancient Greece. He regarded Görres and Creuzer as being the primary members of a concerted conspiracy to undermine Western culture and replace it with oriental barbarism. Voss was scandalized by Creuzer's emphasis on the erotic in Hindu mythology. In his eyes, this was a sign of moral depravity and degeneracy on the part of both the Hindus and their modern German admirers. Moreover, Voss was critical of Creuzer's method, which he considered sheer dilettantism. Creuzer was interested primarily in interpreting the ancient myths in a symbolic fashion, but this was far removed from a historical or text-critical approach to the sources that would seem to be required to justify the kinds of historical claims about influence that he was making. In short Creuzer's *Symbolik* was not to be regarded as a historically based mythology but rather as a work of the creative imagination of the author.

This was a signal conflict in German intellectual life of the day. It pitted the classicist advocates of Enlightenment reason against the orientalist, Romantic critics of the Enlightenment who were concerned with feeling and emotion. This conflict marked the beginnings of the cultural debates that we know in our own day under headings such as multiculturalism. To appreciate the topicality of these issues even today, one need only think of the debates caused by the suggestion, made by Martin Bernal in his controversial *Black Athena*, that classical Greek culture derived in part from Africa.⁶⁰ Another modern echo of this debate can be seen in the controversy concerning the importance of the Western canon in education that was set off by Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*.⁶¹

It should also be noted that Creuzer's book had an important reception in France. The French Hellenist Joseph-Daniel Guigniaut (1794–1876), a student of Hegel's friend Victor Cousin (1792–1867), translated Creuzer's *Symbolik* as *Religions de l'antiquité considérées principalement dans leurs formes symboliques et mythologiques*.⁶² This work appeared in multiple volumes beginning

⁶⁰ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785–1985*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1987. *Black Athena: Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 2, *The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1991. *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 3, *The Linguistic Evidence*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2006.

⁶¹ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, New York: Simon and Schuster 1987. See also E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, New York: Vintage Books 1988. Dinesh D'Souza, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, New York: Vintage 1992.

⁶² Friedrich Creuzer, *Religions de l'antiquité, considérées principalement dans leurs formes symboliques et mythologiques*, tomes I–IV (in 10 parts), trans. by J.D. Guigniaut, Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, Libraires 1825–51. (Starting with tome III, Part I (in 1838) the work was published by Cabinet de lecture allemande de Kossbühl.) (See *Hegel's Library*, 668–9.)

in 1825. It is best characterized as an original adaptation and development of Creuzer's work instead of a straightforward translation. In his memoirs Creuzer writes that Guigniaut transformed his work into "a kind of mythological-archeological encyclopedia."⁶³ When the author, presumably at Cousin's suggestion, sent Hegel a copy of the initial volume, Hegel's reaction was "Mr. Guigniaut's labor has produced a book out of Mr. Creuzer's work."⁶⁴ Hegel, however, continues with high praise: the author "has so greatly enriched the work through his erudition and development of the ideas that I know of no work capable of conveying a clearer and at once more richly developed idea of the religions Mr. Guigniaut has treated."⁶⁵ In 1827 Hegel repeatedly refers to Guigniaut's work in his book review of Wilhelm von Humboldt's treatise on the *Bhagavad-Gita*.⁶⁶

Hegel knew Creuzer personally. In 1808 the two had corresponded, when Creuzer asked Hegel to contribute to the newly created *Heidelberger Jahrbücher der Literatur*.⁶⁷ Later they met personally when they became colleagues in Heidelberg, where Hegel was professor from 1816 to 1818, immediately before coming to Berlin.⁶⁸ Rosenkranz especially emphasized Hegel's sympathy for Creuzer during the Heidelberg period.⁶⁹ Evidence of this can be found in the many letters that the two exchanged after Hegel's move to the Prussian capital.⁷⁰ In his lectures Hegel often refers to Creuzer as his friend, and by doing so he was publicly taking sides in the controversy that was raging at the time.

In 1821 Hegel mentions Creuzer's work in the *Philosophy of Right*, where he takes the minority view by praising it: "What can be more interesting in this

⁶³ See Creuzer's *Paralipomena der Lebensskizzen eines alten Professors*, Part 5, vol. 3, of *Friedrich Creuzer's Deutsche Schriften*, p. 13.

⁶⁴ See Hegel, *Letters*, p. 637; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 508, p. 109. ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Episode*, p. 119; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 115. *Episode*, p. 133; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 122. *Episode*, p. 141; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 126.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *Letters* (not printed in this edition); *Briefe*, vol. 1, letter 123. *Letters*, pp. 93–4; *Briefe*, vol. 1, letter 124.

⁶⁸ For Hegel's relation to Creuzer, see Martin Donougho, "Hegel and Creuzer: or, Did Hegel Believe in Myth?" in *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by David Kolb, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992, pp. 59–80. Johannes Hoffmeister, "Hegel und Creuzer," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 8, 1930, pp. 260–82. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hegel und die Heidelberger Romantik," in his *Hegels Dialektik. Fünf hermeneutische Studien*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1971, pp. 71–81. Otto Pöggeler, "Hegel und Heidelberg," *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 6, 1971, pp. 65–133. Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, pp. 202–20.

⁶⁹ Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, p. 300.

⁷⁰ Hegel, *Letters*, p. 368; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 359. *Letters*, p. 368; *Briefe*, vol. 2, letter 389. *Letters* (not printed in this edition); *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 399. *Letters*, p. 369; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 400. *Letters* (not printed in this edition); *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 403. *Letters* (not printed in this edition); *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 408. *Letters* (not printed in this edition); *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 416. *Letters* (not printed in this edition); *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 428. *Letters* (not printed in this edition); *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 429. *Letters*, pp. 369f.; *Briefe*, vol. 4.1, letter 450a. *Letters*, p. 371; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 493.

connection than the ingenious and learned *explanations* which my highly esteemed friend, Mr. Creuzer, has given of the agrarian festivals, images, and shrines of the ancients (especially in the fourth volume of his *Symbolik und Mythologie*)?"⁷¹ While Hegel indeed lauds Creuzer's work and his expertise, he sidesteps the critical issue that was the cause of controversy, namely, whether Greek mythology was indebted to Eastern mythology. In a draft of a letter to Creuzer from the end of May 1821, Hegel strongly praises the work once again and indicates that he will make use of it in his lectures on aesthetics in the coming semester.⁷²

In another letter to Creuzer from 1823, Hegel openly acknowledges his inspiration from his friend's research: "Both my lectures on the philosophy of world history last winter and my renewed occupation with aesthetics this summer are related to your *Symbolik* in so many ways that I am drawing from it the most abundant substance both in materials and in thought content."⁷³ In his treatment of the Greeks in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel takes up the question of the origin of Greek religion and refers his auditors to Creuzer's work.⁷⁴ The historical dimension of Creuzer's study was attractive to Hegel, who also believed that there was an organic development of religion from one culture to the next. Thus he had no reason to be threatened, like the classicists, by the idea that some aspects of the culture of the Greeks and the Romans could be found in earlier, oriental peoples.

In connection with his treatment of the Greek gods in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel gives an account of the symbolic understanding of the divine. Here he freely acknowledges that certain aspects of the Greek religion, such as the mystery cults, derive from Eastern sources. But while he grants this continuity, he wants to claim that there is an important difference between some of the Eastern gods and the Greek divinities. While the former are symbolical, representing something beyond their immediate appearance, the latter are transparent. Not symbols of the natural forces, the Greek gods *are* the natural forces themselves. Helios is the sun and not the god of the sun, just as Athena is the city and spirit of Athens itself.⁷⁵ This discussion is clearly inspired by Creuzer, whom Hegel refers to directly in this context.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Hegel, *PR*, § 203; *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 281.

⁷² See Hegel, *Letters*, p. 466; *Briefe*, vol. 2, letter 389, p. 266.

⁷³ Hegel, *Letters*, p. 370; *Briefe*, vol. 4.1, letter 450a, p. 47. (Translation slightly modified.)

⁷⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 237; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 312–13. Hegel has a parallel discussion to this, also with explicit reference to Creuzer, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. See *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 62f. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 477f.

⁷⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 644–5; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 536–7. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 321.

⁷⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 493; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 392: "There have been many investigations—that of Creuzer particularly—into the historic origin of the Greek gods and their underlying significance."

Also in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*,⁷⁷ Hegel makes extensive use of Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie*. He designates the art of the Orient as "The Symbolic Form of Art," under which rubric he treats the art of Persia, India, and Egypt. This form of art is contrasted to the classical, i.e., Greek and Roman. According to Hegel, symbolic art of the Orient was the forerunner and precursor of Greek classical art. In his lectures Hegel refers to Creuzer in his account of the proper approach to mythology:

On this view mythology must therefore be interpreted *symbolically*. For "symbolically" means here only that the myths, as a product of spirit (no matter how bizarre, jocular, grotesque they may look, no matter how much too of the casual external caprices of fancy is intermingled with them) still comprise meanings, i.e., general thoughts about the nature of God, i.e., philosophical theories. On these lines in recent times Creuzer especially has begun again in his *Symbolik* to study the mythological ideas of the ancients not, in the usual manner, externally and prosaically, nor according to their artistic value; on the contrary, he has sought in them inner rational meanings.⁷⁸

Although he seems to be explaining Creuzer's approach, Hegel is in fact explaining his own. He continues:

In this enterprise he is guided by the presupposition that the myths and legendary tales took their origin in the human spirit. This spirit may indeed make play with its ideas of the gods, but, when the interest of religion enters, it treads on a higher sphere in which reason is the inventor of shapes, even if it too remains saddled with the defect of being unable yet at this first stage to unfold their inner core adequately. This hypothesis is absolutely true: religion has its source in the spirit, which seeks its own truth, has an inkling of it, and brings the same before our minds in some shape or other more closely or distantly related to this truthful content. But when reason invents the shapes, there arises also the need to know their rationality.⁷⁹

Here one sees Hegel, with Creuzer, making a case for the importance of studying the art and religion of the East. He fully sides with Creuzer against the critics who wished to diminish the importance of this material.

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel refers to Creuzer in his introductory comments where he examines the relation between philosophy and religion. Once again the question of the proper methodology in studying religion and mythology is at issue. He explains that mythology contains a rational element, and therefore it is a reasonable approach to this body of

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 310f.; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 417f. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 403; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 534. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 452; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 36. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 62. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 477; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 68. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 640; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 278. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, pp. 642–3; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 681f. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 780; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 451.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 310; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 417.

⁷⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 310f.; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 417.

material to try to discern that element, even though the ancients who believed in the given mythological stories were unaware of this. This time acknowledging the controversy surrounding Creuzer's research, Hegel explains:

This mode of treating mythology was that of the neo-Platonists; in recent times it has for the most part become the work of my friend Creuzer in his *Symbolik*. This method of treatment is combated and condemned by others. Man, it is said, must set to work historically alone, and it is not historic when a theory unthought of by the ancients, is read into a myth, or brought out in it. In one light, this is quite correct, for it points to a method adopted by Creuzer, and also by the Alexandrians who acted in a similar way.⁸⁰

Creuzer's interests also included the neo-Platonists, and Hegel here (and elsewhere) refers to his work on Plotinus and Proclus.⁸¹ It is anachronistic to understand the ancient myths in terms of a modern way of thinking; thus the critics reject the approach of Creuzer as ahistorical. It was said that he forces a foreign explanatory pattern onto the subject matter. Hegel then goes on to defend Creuzer's methodology against the criticisms leveled against it:

In conscious thought the ancients did not have such theories before them, nor did anyone maintain them, yet to say that such content was not implicitly present, is an absurd contention. As the products of reason, though not of thinking reason, the religions of the people, as also the mythologies, however simple and even foolish they may appear, indubitably contain as genuine works of art, thoughts, universal determinations and truth, for the instinct of reason is at their basis.⁸²

Even though myths are expressed in the form of sense and representation, they nonetheless contain a deeper truth since they are the products of the human mind. Hegel acknowledges that there may well be many contingent circumstances that lie behind a specific myth, and one must have an awareness of these in order to venture an interpretation. But the key is not to think that the whole field of mythology is sheer contingency and arbitrariness. Hegel insists that there is reason at work here.

Creuzer was a major influence on Hegel's understanding and general approach to religion. In particular, he gave Hegel a greater appreciation for the religions of the East, which placed Hegel in the middle of the contemporary controversies surrounding the value and status of the newly discovered material about these religions. While Hegel is known to be a great critic of the Romantics, he was sympathetic to their attempt to understand the deeper meaning of the Asian religions. But while Hegel and the Romantics were both interested in these religions, what it was specifically that attracted them was

⁸⁰ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 82; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 114f.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 2, p. 81; *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 259. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 2, p. 406; *Jub.*, vol. 19, p. 39. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 2, p. 434; *Jub.*, vol. 19, p. 73.

⁸² Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 82; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 115.

entirely different. One of the things that the Romantics found attractive in, for example, Hinduism, was its sensual aspect, which they regarded to be a fruitful alternative to traditional Western ways of thinking. By contrast, for Hegel and Creuzer, it was the hidden rational dimension of these religions that was of interest. Instead of contrasting the religions of the East with Christianity or using Eastern religions as a polemical alternative to Christianity as had been done since the beginning of the introduction of Orientalism in Europe, Hegel and Creuzer thus wanted to trace the links between the different world religions, thereby establishing a continuous development from the religions of the East through the Greeks and the Romans and ending in Christianity. The rational element or *logos* could be found in all religions, even those of the East. On this score, in contrast to many scholars then and now, Hegel had no problems with the suggestion that aspects of Greek religion and culture came from Egypt,⁸³ and that aspects of Egyptian religion and culture came from Ethiopia.⁸⁴ Moreover, he enthusiastically embraced the advances in Oriental studies in his own day.⁸⁵

⁸³ See, for example, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 212f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 282.

⁸⁴ See, for example, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 201; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 267: "With this is connected the consideration that Egypt probably received its culture from Ethiopia; principally from the island Meroe, which, according to recent hypotheses, was occupied by a sacerdotal people."

⁸⁵ See, for example, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 58n; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 94n and f.: "We have to thank this interest for many valuable discoveries in Oriental literature, and for a renewed study of treasures previously known in the department of ancient Asiatic culture, mythology, religions and history. . . . The savants M. Abel Remusat and M. Saint Martin, on the one hand, have undertaken the most meritorious investigations in the Chinese literature, with a view to make this also a base of operations for researches in the Mongolian and, if such were possible, in the Tibetan."

Immediate Religion

Magic

Hegel begins his account of “immediate religion” by explaining its relation to what is usually called “natural religion.” In the Enlightenment natural religion was thought to be “what human beings are supposed to be able to cognize through their reason, through the natural light of their reason.”¹ Natural religion thus constitutes a contrastive term to “revealed religion,” which concerns what can be known about God by virtue of divine revelation. While the key to natural religion is the rational faculty of the human mind, the key to revelation can be anything but rational. Hegel objects to this terminology since he thinks that we usually associate the word “natural” with the objects of sense perception or what is immediately given in nature. It is not a term that is usually thought in connection with reason. Hegel wants to distinguish his notion of natural religion from this traditional usage of the term. In order to avoid the problem, he chooses another formulation, “immediate religion.” By this he means to designate the most basic forms of religion that are dependent on sense perception and an immediate relation to nature.² This represents the early stages of human development when people had still yet to attain the rational capacity to conceive the divine.

The beginning of the historical development of religion is found in what Hegel refers to as “magic” or “sorcery.” While his main treatment of this is clearly in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,³ it also comes up in his brief and infamous account of Africa in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.⁴ Magic is, according to Hegel’s view, the most rudimentary,

¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 517; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 415.

² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 536f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 434: “Human beings in that situation still exist in a state of immediate desire, force, and action, behaving in accord with their immediate will.”

³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 272–99; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 176–203. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 535–47; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 433–45. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 724–5; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 613–14. See also *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, pp. 270–316; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 279–324. *NR*, pp. 77–105.

⁴ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 196–7; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 98–101. *LPWHI*, pp. 173–90; *VG*, pp. 203–24. *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 91–9; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 135–45.

immediate form of religious thinking, indeed, so rudimentary that it cannot be designated as a religion proper. Hegel mentions several peoples, such as the Eskimos, Indian tribes of North America, and native tribes of Mongolia and Africa, that practice magic and, to his mind, have not progressed beyond this initial state. This is a notorious part of Hegel's thought, which has attracted the attention of many modern commentators, who are rightly outraged by his racism and Eurocentrism.⁵ Indeed, there is no denying that his general tone is rather demeaning when it comes to discussing these non-European peoples.

With regard to the development of Hegel's thought on this topic, his material on magic does not grow regularly and steadily as one might expect. This material is not presented as an independent section in the initial lecture course from 1821. By contrast, he gives his fullest account of this first stage of religious development in the lectures from 1824. Then, somewhat surprisingly, his analysis in 1827 is somewhat more compact, although it is still designated as an independent section. Then in the fragmentary material that we have from the 1831 lectures, this material more or less drops out. It is difficult to know what conclusions to draw from this. But in any case the lectures from 1824 and 1827 provide ample material for analysis.

2.1. HEGEL'S SOURCES FOR "MAGIC"

Hegel draws on a number of different sources for information about this initial form of religious practice and thought.⁶ With regard to the Eskimos, mention is made in the lectures of the accounts of the British expeditions led by John Ross (1777–1856) and William Edward Parry (1790–1855).⁷ Hegel quotes at length from Ross' *A Voyage of Discovery, Made under the Order of the Admiralty, in His Majesty's Ships Isabella and Alexander, for the Purpose of Exploring Baffin's Bay, and Enquiring into the Probability of a North-West Passage* from 1819.⁸ This was an account of a voyage to the Arctic made in

⁵ See, for example, Teshale Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2011, pp. 171–229. Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," in *Hegel after Derrida*, ed. by Stuart Barnett, New York: Routledge 1998, pp. 41–63. Robert Bernasconi, "With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Eurocentrism," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, vol. 22, 2000, pp. 171–201. Ronald Kuykendal, "Hegel and Africa: An Evaluation of the Treatment of Africa in the *Philosophy of History*," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1993, pp. 571–81.

⁶ For Hegel's sources generally, see the "Bibliography of Sources" in *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 783–806. For his sources for "magic" see the "Editorial Introduction," *ibid.*, pp. 4–5, pp. 33–5, pp. 58–9.

⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 273f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 178. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 541; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 439. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, p. 294; *Jub.*, vol. 15, p. 302. See also *EL*, § 71, note; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 178, note.

⁸ John Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery, Made under the Orders of the Admiralty, in His Majesty's Ships Isabella and Alexander, for the Purpose of Exploring Baffin's Bay, and Enquiring into the*

1818 under Ross' command. When Hegel quotes from this work he seems to confuse it with a subsequent one by Parry, which would seem to imply that he also was familiar with Parry's *Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific* from 1824, although he does not quote or reference it directly.⁹ Hegel's confusion is perhaps understandable since Parry was one of the officers in command of one of the ships on Ross' initial voyage in 1818, and it was due to disagreements with Ross that Parry set off on his own expedition in 1819, and commanded a number of subsequent voyages.

With regard to his sources of information about magic and sorcery in the African tribes, Hegel writes, "Our information on the state of these peoples comes mainly from missionaries of bygone days, and recent reports are few and far between; one must accordingly be on one's guard against much of the earlier information, especially since the missionaries are natural enemies of the sorcerers."¹⁰ He refers directly to the work of the Italian Capuchin missionary Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo (1621–78), who lived in Portuguese Angola from 1654 to 1667 and again from 1673 to 1677. Only in 1687 some ten years after his death was his main work published: *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba, et Angola situati nell'Etiopia inferiore occidentale*.¹¹ This was followed by German and French translations. In Hegel's

Probability of a North-West Passage, vols 1–2, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 2nd ed. 1819. This is the edition referred to by the editors in *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 273, note 110, where reference is made to vol. 1, pp. 168–9, pp. 175–8, and pp. 179–80. However, this same material was also available in the one-volume first edition from the same year, i.e., John Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery, Made under the Orders of the Admiralty, in His Majesty's Ships Isabella and Alexander, for the Purpose of Exploring Baffin's Bay, and Enquiring into the Probability of a North-West Passage*, London: John Murray 1819, see pp. 123–4, pp. 127–9, and pp. 130–1. Moreover, the pages numbers from Hegel's excerpts (from pp. 128f.) from this text demonstrate that it is the one-volume edition that he was making use of. See Hegel, *Berliner Schriften 1818–1831*, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1956, p. 710: "Eskimaux—[Abschrift aus:] *A Voyage of Discovery* by J. Ross, London 1819, S. 128f."

⁹ William Edward Parry, *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific; Performed in the Years 1821–22–23, in His Majesty's Ships Fury and Hecla*, London: John Murray 1824. The editors of *LPR* (in notes 109 and 110 in *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 273) refer to Parry's *Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific; Performed in the Years 1819–20, in His Majesty's Ships Hecla and Griper*, 2nd ed., London: John Murray 1821. But this work does not contain the mentions of the Eskimo sorcerers or *angekoks* that Hegel refers to. They only appear in Parry's work from 1824. Hegel also owned a copy of Parry's *Journals of the First, Second and Third Voyages for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific*, vols 1–5, London: John Murray 1828; Parry, *Narrative of an Attempt to Reach the North Pole, in Boats Fitted for the Purpose, and Attached to His Majesty's Ship Hecla in the Year MDCCCXXVII, under the Command of Captain William Edward Parry*, London: John Murray 1828. But these works were published after his first mention of "Captain Parry's account" in the lectures of 1824. See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 273; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 178.

¹⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 276; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 180.

¹¹ Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba, et Angola situati nell'Etiopia inferiore occidentale*, Bologna: Giacomo Monti 1687.

lectures the German edition of this work from 1694 is quoted at length,¹² but it is uncertain whether the reference to the German edition was Hegel's own or that of his first editors.¹³

In a letter Hegel refers to the work of the British explorer James Kingston Tuckey (1776–1816), entitled *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire*.¹⁴ Tuckey led an expedition to explore the River Congo in 1816. Although he died underway in October of the same year, his account of the journey was published posthumously in 1818 and fed a growing interest in Africa at the time. Tuckey's account is accompanied by both the journal of another member of the expedition, the botanist Christen Smith, and a long appendix with chapters from a handful of other scholars treating topics such as the languages, biology, zoology, and geology of the regions visited during the expedition. Most important for Hegel's purposes, this work contains sporadic information about the religious beliefs and customs of some of the African peoples that the British encountered.

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* there are a few traces of hidden references to Thomas Edward Bowdich's (1791–1824) *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* from 1819.¹⁵ Bowdich was in the employ of the African Company of Merchants in the British Gold Coast, where his uncle was the governor. In 1817 he led an embassy to Coomassie, the capital of the Ashanti Empire in an attempt to extend British colonial power along the coast. The Ashanti Empire was a state in western Africa that occupied a large region that corresponds to Ghana today. When he returned to England the following year, Bowdich wrote the said monograph about his experiences on the expedition. In the passage in question Hegel refers to the account of human sacrifice among the Ashanti (given in a chapter entitled "Mr. Hutchison's Diary," which was the work of William Hutchison, a British resident of Coomassie).¹⁶

¹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 294f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 198f. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 544; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 441f. *LPWHI*, p. 180; *VGH*, pp. 221f. Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Historische Beschreibung der in dem untern Occidentalischen Mohrenland ligenden drey Königreichen, Congo, Matamba, und Angola*, Munich: Jaecklin 1694.

¹³ See note 118 in *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 276–7.

¹⁴ J.K. Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, Usually Called the Congo in South Africa, in 1816*, London: John Murray 1818. (See *Letters*, p. 496; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 473, p. 45.) Bernasconi has called into question the importance of this work for Hegel's understanding of Africa; see his "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," p. 44.

¹⁵ T. Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom and Geographical Notices of other Parts of the Interior of Africa*, London: John Murray 1819. See note 87 in *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 545. For a highly informative account of Hegel's use of Bowdich's work and his other sources about African culture and religion, see Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," pp. 41–63.

¹⁶ See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 545; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 443: "Thirty years ago an English ambassador found himself in this capital, and together with his entourage he escaped destruction only because that secret [that the order was given to sacrifice people] was made public and he was warned. The resolution was actually carried out, and although not very many succumbed, this nightly havoc nevertheless continued for seventeen days." This seems to refer to Bowdich, *Mission from Cape*

Hegel also mentions the reverence shown to the bones of the deceased among some African peoples, and it is quite possible that here as well he is drawing on the same passage from this work.¹⁷

Hegel further refers to the book penned by the Scottish traveler James Bruce (1730–94), *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, which appeared in five volumes in 1790.¹⁸ A German translation followed in 1791.¹⁹ It is unclear whether Hegel read the original text or availed himself of the German translation. Bruce was a colorful figure who went to Algiers in 1763, where he worked for the British consulate. Once freed from his duties, he traveled extensively in North Africa and the Near East. In 1768 he set off to discover the source of the Nile, which he reached in 1770, after having stayed in Ethiopia for two years. When he returned to Scotland in 1774, he wrote up an account of his journey as a testimony to his achievement in the face of general skepticism. The work was known in Hegel's time primarily as an important contribution to geography. Hegel refers to this book in a couple of different places, where what is at issue is the Muslim prohibition against depicting living things with images.²⁰ This is irrelevant for Hegel's treatment of magic, but the work does contain a wealth of information about the peoples of Africa that Hegel might have used.

Coast Castle to Ashantee (pp. 419–21). See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 98; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 143: "As a prelude to the war, the King ordains an onslaught upon his own metropolis, as if to excite the due degree of frenzy. The King sent word to the English Hutchinson [sc. Hutchison]: 'Christian, take care, and watch well over your family. The messenger of death has drawn his sword and will strike the neck of many Ashantees; when the drum sounds it is the death signal for multitudes. Come to the King, if you can, and fear nothing for yourself.' The drum beat, and a terrible carnage was begun; all who came in the way of the frenzied negroes in the streets were stabbed." See also *LPWHI*, p. 188; *VGH*, p. 232.

¹⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 293f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 197. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 97f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 143. *LPWHI*, p. 220; *VGH*, p. 271. See Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, pp. 419–20.

¹⁸ James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 and 1773*, vols 1–5, London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson 1790. (Note that volume 5 is an Appendix entitled *Select Specimens of Natural History Collected in Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, in Egypt, Arabia, Abyssinia, and Nubia.*)

¹⁹ James Bruce, *Reisen zur Entdeckung der Quellen des Nils in den Jahren 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 und 1773*, vols 1–5, trans. by Johann Jacob Volkmann, with a Foreword and notes by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Leipzig: in der Weidmannschen Buchhandlung 1790–91. See also James Bruce, *Kurze Beschreibung von Abyssinien und seinen heutigen Bewohnern. Ein historisch-geographischer Auszug aus James Bruces Reise nach den Nilquellen*, Leipzig: in der C. Weigel und Schneiderischen Kunst- und Buchhandlung 1792.

²⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, p. 237; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 146. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 42, *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 72: "James Bruce in his journey to Abyssinia showed paintings of a fish to a Turk; at first the Turk was astonished, but quickly enough he found an answer: 'If this fish shall rise up against you on the last day and say: "You have indeed given me a body but no living soul," how will you then justify yourself against this accusation?"' This passage refers to Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, vol. 4, Book 8, Chapter 13, pp. 616–17. Bruce, *Reisen zur Entdeckung der Quellen des Nils*, vol. 4, Book 8, Chapter 13, pp. 619–20. See also *LPWHI*, p. 187; *VGH*, p. 230. *VG*, pp. 220f.

It has been speculated that Hegel made use of *The History of Dahomy, An Inland Kingdom of Africa* by Archibald Dalzel (1740–1811) for his information about the Kingdom of Dahomy,²¹ which he mentions in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.²² A surgeon by trade, the Scot Dalzel was sent to Africa by the Committee of Merchants Trading to Africa in 1763. Once there he quickly became a slave trader. He later returned and served as Governor of the Gold Coast (then a British colony) from 1792 to 1798 and again from 1800 to 1802. He published his celebrated work *The History of Dahomy* in 1793. Dahomy or Dahomey was a powerful kingdom in Africa that occupied the territory of what is Benin today. It was a major hub of the slave trade in the nineteenth century. Dalzel uses his history to make a case for the benefits of slavery against the critical voices of the abolitionists; despite this, it still is regarded as a major work on its subject. Dalzel provides a wealth of negative information about African life and culture. He argues quite absurdly that by buying slaves from Africa, the Europeans were doing the slaves a favor since otherwise they would be the victims of human sacrifice. While it is clear that Hegel is a consistent critic of slavery, it is certainly possible that he was the victim of some of the misinformation or exaggerations that appear in Dalzel's accounts. The full extent of the importance of this work for Hegel remains to be seen.

Finally, it should be added that Hegel also mentions Herodotus as a source about the religion of the African tribes, but it is unclear whether he received any detailed information from him on this issue.²³ While it might seem odd to us from today's perspective since we have a wealth of modern studies at our disposal, it was not unusual for Hegel to use Herodotus; indeed, he also uses him extensively for information about other ancient peoples such as the Persians and Egyptians (not to mention the Greeks). On the whole, it can be said that Hegel had a fair amount of material to draw on for his account of the religious practices and beliefs that he discusses in connection with magic.

²¹ Archibald Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy, An Inland Kingdom of Africa*, London: T. Spilsbury and Son 1793. The suggestion that Hegel made use of this work comes from Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," pp. 44f.

²² Hegel, *LPWHI*, p. 187; *VGH*, p. 230.

²³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 275; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 179. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 542; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 439. See also *LPWHI*, p. 179; *VG*, p. 210: "The character of the Africans shows the antithesis between man and nature in its earliest form. In this condition, man sees himself and nature as opposed to one another, but with himself in the commanding position; this is the basic situation in Africa, as *Herodotus* was the first to testify. We can sum up the principle of African religion in his declaration that all men in Africa are sorcerers." See also *LPWHI*, p. 179; *VGH*, p. 220. See Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by Aubrey de Sélincourt, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1954, Book II, Chapter 33, p. 142.

2.2. IMMEDIATE, DIRECT MAGIC

Hegel characterizes the stage of magic by saying that this is the view that “the *spiritual* . . . is power over nature.”²⁴ This idea is simply the awareness that the individual human mind is greater than the natural world that one encounters outside oneself. But Hegel goes on to note that there is as yet no conception of the divine: “this spiritual aspect is not yet present as spirit, is not yet present in its universality. Instead the spiritual is at first just the singular and contingent human self-consciousness which, in spite of being only sheer desire, self-consciously knows itself to be nobler than nature, and knows that self-consciousness is a power transcending nature.”²⁵ For Hegel, at this rudimentary stage of human development there has not yet arisen the notion that human beings are spirit, that is, something infinite and valuable on their own. Humans live in immediate proximity with nature and cannot imagine anything beyond it. Their self-conception, he claims, is thus of merely physical beings who are devoid of any higher principle. Given this self-conception, it is impossible for them to conceive of a divinity since this would require some conception of the notion of spirit. According to Hegel, people in this condition live in the immediacy of the senses.

Humans at this level have not achieved freedom according to Hegel's definition and are instead, he claims, still bound to nature. He explains, “For only free persons can allow the external world, other human beings, and natural things to confront them freely. But for one who is not free, others are not free either.”²⁶ As the lordship–bondage dialectic demonstrated, human beings can only be free when they recognize themselves in the eyes of other free individuals. At this stage in the development of religious thinking, this has not yet taken place.²⁷ Here human beings do not recognize each other as free individuals. Instead, they occupy a stage where they relate to objects of nature in a negative way, but not yet to other human beings. There is no recognition of “the other” as human but only as “the other” of nature. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* this is the stage that precedes the lordship–bondage dialectic.

At first there is a recognition that the individual's power over nature is a special gift that differs from the ordinary affairs of life. There is an awareness that the domination of nature is not something that is open to everyone in his or her ordinary daily pursuits. Rather it is ascribed to special individuals who must perform ceremonial acts in order to put themselves in the proper state to achieve this domination. This is then the origin of, for example, the

²⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 272; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 177. Similarly, he defines this as the notion “that this singular self-consciousness takes the form of power over nature” (*ibid.*).

²⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 538; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 436.

²⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 539; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 437.

²⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 540; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 437.

shaman, who must endure fasting, perform a particular dance, enter a trance or a drunken state, or some such thing in order to be able to command nature. Something must be done to separate him from the ordinary course of things and to raise him to the necessary level. The shaman is a special person set apart from the community by means of his unique ability and knowledge. This knowledge is handed down from one individual to another through the generations and constitutes a kind of trade secret that is unavailable to other people.

Hegel distinguishes magic from prayer.²⁸ In prayer the individual makes an appeal to God as a higher being to intercede and change some circumstance in the world to one's benefit. By contrast, in magic or sorcery there is no such appeal to a higher being. Instead, the sorcerer directly commands the forces of nature that he wishes to change or affect. The notion of prayer is a much later development.

At this initial stage the power over nature is conceived as direct, that is, without any intermediary means or agency. To exercise power over nature by means of magic is not the same as working on nature by means of tools. People avail themselves of magic to protect themselves as individuals or groups from the ravages of nature: "earthquakes, thunderstorms, protracted drought, flood, rapacious beasts or enemies."²⁹ There is no appeal to a god or the like since at this stage there is not yet a sense of the divine in nature.

Hegel cites, as an illustration of this initial stage, an example of the so-called "angekoks" or sorcerers among the Eskimos. According to the report he quotes, the angekoks are said to have the power

to raise or still the tempest, to attract whales, and so on, and . . . they learned this art from old angekoks. . . . So there they were in the presence of one of these angekoks, who claimed to be able to make the wind get up and to attract whales. He said it was done through words and gestures. But the words (which they got him to repeat for them) were meaningless, and were not directed at any being that was supposed to act as intermediary, but directly at the natural object over which he wished to exert his power; he asked for no assistance from any being.³⁰

²⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 540; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 438.

²⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 541; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 439.

³⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 274; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 178. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 542; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 439. Hegel's source is John Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery, Made under the Orders of the Admiralty, in His Majesty's Ships Isabella and Alexander, for the Purpose of Exploring Baffin's Bay, and Enquiring into the Probability of a North-West Passage*, London: John Murray 1819, p. 128: "The word 'angekok,' which means a conjuror, or sorcerer, was then pronounced to him [sc. the Eskimo Ervick being interviewed by means of an interpreter] in the South Greenland language. He said, that they had many of these: that it was in their power to raise a storm, or make a calm, and to drive off seals, or to bring them. . . . Finding that Otooniah, the nephew of Ervick, a lad of eighteen years of age, was a young *angekok*, I [sc. Captain Ross] brought him into the cabin by himself, and, through Sacheuse [sc. the interpreter], asked him how he learned this art. He replied, from an old *angekok*; that he could raise the wind, and drive off seals and

Hegel describes a similar account about the sorcerer in an African tribe:

A hurricane made [the sorcerer's] spell-casting necessary, and despite the missionary's vehement protests the ceremony was put in hand. The sorcerer appeared in special, fantastic attire, bedecked with animal skins and birds, weapons and horns, and accompanied by a large escort. He inspected the sky and the clouds. He chewed a few roots, roots of tabs, murmured some barbaric words, let out a fearsome howl, and spat the tab-roots up into the sky. When the clouds came nearer all the same, he waved his arms and conjured the storm to go somewhere else. And when it stayed where it was, he flew into a rage, fired arrows at the sky, threatened that he would give it a hard time, and brandished a knife in the air.³¹

There is no appeal to the help of spirits or gods; there is no use of charms or other intermediary means. The belief is that human beings can directly influence nature. Hegel also mentions a similar account by Parry without quoting it.³²

This form of religion is unaware of anything beyond the natural element that it can see. For this reason there is no belief in God or the devil or an afterlife, all of which require a degree of abstraction from the immediate objects of sense. According to the same report that Hegel uses, the Eskimos "have not the slightest representation of spirit or of higher beings, of an invisible higher being above them, or of an essential substance as opposed to their empirical existence in general. Nor do they have any representation of the immortality of the soul or the eternal nature of spirit, or of the being-in-and-for-itself of the single spirit, nor yet of any evil spirit."³³ When one of

birds. He said that this was done by gestures and words; but the words had no meaning, nor were they said or addressed to any thing but the wind or the sea. He assured us, that in this incantation he did not receive assistance from any thing, nor could he be made to understand what a good or an evil spirit meant." See also John Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery, Made under the Orders of the Admiralty, in His Majesty's Ships Isabella and Alexander, for the Purpose of Exploring Baffin's Bay, and Enquiring into the Probability of a North-West Passage*, vols 1–2, 2nd ed., London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown 1819, vol. 1, pp. 176f.

³¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 277; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 181.

³² William Edward Parry, *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific; Performed in the Years 1821–22–23, in His Majesty's Ships Fury and Hecla*, London: John Murray 1824. See, for instance p. 454, "In the evening we visited the tent of the old man from Toonoonek. He was an Angetkok and seemed fond of exhibiting his skill. He sat with his arms drawn out of the sleeves of his jacket and apparently folded over his breast, but in reality employing his finger tapping upon the skins he sat on. This noise I was told was made by his Tornga, or spirit, and a great many questions were put to him by the bystanders; these were answered by tapping in a particular manner, and the sounds were then interpreted by the craft of the old Angetkok." See also p. 165, p. 174, p. 384, p. 455.

³³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 274; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 178. See John Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery*, pp. 127f. (2nd ed., vol. 1, pp. 175f. Note that the text in the second edition has been slightly changed.): "Ervick, being the senior of the first party [sc. of Eskimos] that came on board, was judged to be the most proper person to question on the subject of religion. I directed Sacheuse to ask him, if he had any knowledge of a Supreme Being; but after trying every word used in his own

the Eskimos who was acting as an interpreter for the English explorers was asked about these things, his answers revealed a complete lack of awareness of the possibility of such things beyond the immediate empirical realm: "He was told that there is an omnipresent, all-providing, invisible being who has made everything. He was very surprised, and when he asked where it lived and was told everywhere, he was frightened and wanted to run away. When he was asked where people went when they died, he replied they were buried."³⁴

According to Hegel, despite the rudimentary level of understanding here, there is something correct about this view, namely, the recognition of spirit as "a power, as higher than natural things."³⁵ Hegel notes that in some African or native American tribes, this recognition of the superiority of spirit over nature is expressed by the practice of killing the mortally ill or elderly. The point of this practice is, according to Hegel, "that man is not to perish by means of nature, but is to have honor rendered to him at human hands."³⁶

For Hegel, this most rudimentary stage hardly qualifies for religion at all. According to his view, a religion is a belief system that has some conception of the divine, and this is what is absent here. In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, he says, "In modern times, travelers (for instance, the captains Ross and Parry) have again found tribes (the Esquimos), which they claim have no religion at all, not even the tiny trace of it that may still be found in African sorcerers (the 'wonder-workers' of Herodotus)."³⁷ Similarly, he claims, "Children, the Eskimos, etc., know nothing of God; or what the natural man knows of Him is not real knowledge of Him."³⁸ At this stage

language to express it, he could not make him understand what he meant. . . . He had no knowledge, or idea, how he came into being, or of a future state; but said, that when he died he would be put into the ground. Having fully ascertained that he had no idea of a beneficent Supreme Being, I proceeded, through Sacheuse, to inquire if he believed in an evil spirit; but he could not be made to understand what it meant." See also Parry, *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific*, p. 551: "These Esquimaux do not appear to have any idea of the existence of One Supreme Being, nor indeed can they be said to entertain any notions on this subject, which may be dignified with the name of Religion."

³⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 274; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 178f. See John Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery*, pp. 128f. (2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 177): "When Ervick was told that there was an omnipotent, omnipresent, and invisible Being, who had created the sea and land, and all therein, he shewed much surprise, and eagerly asked where he lived. When told that he was every where, he appeared much alarmed, and became impatient to be on deck."

³⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 273; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 177.

³⁶ Ibid. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 277f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 182.

³⁷ Hegel, *EL*, § 71, note; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 178, note. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 724; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 614: "This is the only religion found among the Eskimos. They have magicians, known as *angekoks*, who can summon whales, arouse storms, etc., and also use dancing in their incantations. Very similar are the shamans of Mongolia and elsewhere. These are individuals with a disposition to magnetic [hypnotic] sleepwalking, who intoxicate themselves through potions and leaping, etc., fall to the ground and then in this state make wild utterances."

³⁸ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 3, p. 420; *Jub.*, vol. 19, p. 549.

there is no conception of a deity and no universal. With magic, human consciousness remains at the level of individual human beings with their contingencies. Similarly, the forces of nature are considered as particulars with no universal element.³⁹ Thus this is the level of the senses that cannot see beyond what it immediately perceives. Hegel explains what is lacking here:

To religion belongs essentially the moment of objectivity—that the spiritual power appears for the individual for the single empirical consciousness, as something essentially universal in opposition to empirical self-consciousness, as an other, independent of it; this objectifying is an essential precondition of religion. However inadequate the representation of God may be, it means that the starting point is an other over against this empirical self-consciousness, an other in general.⁴⁰

In the sorcerer's use of magic there is no universal but only the self-conscious agency of the individual. There is no recognition of any greater power beyond this. The focus is the individual magician or sorcerer as individual. What is at issue is a single person who is ruled not by any higher principle, but rather by his own immediate desires and passions. According to Hegel, there is not yet any higher conception of what a human being is beyond the merely sensuous element.

However, this stage looks forward to a higher one. The sorcerer can be seen from two sides: as a regular person with normal abilities and as a sorcerer with the special talent of controlling nature. It is this latter aspect that hints at something higher that will be developed in subsequent forms and will lead to religion proper. The movement towards religion involves objectifying the universal and understanding it as an independent entity.

2.3. MEDIATED, INDIRECT MAGIC

At the second stage a new element is introduced which represents a movement towards genuine religion. While at the first stage the sorcerer tried to exercise his power over nature directly, recognizing no higher elements, at the second stage he tries to exercise this power by means of something objective, for example, a charm, and hereby recognizes an objective power above and beyond his own agency: "This still falls within the sphere of magic: in it there is only the beginning of a consciousness of independent, genuinely essential objectivity—which is, however, still closed in on itself; in it there

³⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 538; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 436.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 278f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 182.

begins also the consciousness of an essential, universal power.”⁴¹ The idea is that human beings do not control nature directly but possess the means to do so *indirectly*. Hegel describes this as a process of objectification.

The story of the development of the different conceptions of the divine is at the same time a story of the development of the self-conception of human beings. They project their own image onto the divine, and that image evolves to ever higher forms. Thus just as the story of human spirit that Hegel traces in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* is the story of the development of human freedom, so also here in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* the development is towards a conception of the divine that mirrors the human spirit as fully developed and free. Hegel explains this as follows: “spirituality as empirical, as merely natural will, should recognize . . . its own essence in religion, and that in such a way that its basic characteristic is not that it is dependent on nature but on the contrary that in religion spirit knows itself as *free*.”⁴² Human beings realize that they can overcome their natural dependency on nature. By an act of their own free will, they can refuse the demands of nature by, for example, fasting or staying awake on vigils. By such acts they demonstrate that the element of spirit that they have in themselves is higher than the element of nature.

There is a form of the dialectic of recognition at work here. The divine is a reflection of the human, and it would not make sense for human beings to worship something that is inferior to themselves. Thus their conceptions of the divine develop parallel to their conceptions of themselves. At the beginning a very rudimentary conception of the divine is adequate for individuals living in very basic conditions. But later when humans develop and civilizations arise, it will no longer do to worship nature gods. A higher conception of the divinity must emerge to gain the recognition of the higher conception of the human spirit that comes with the more advanced stage of human development. Here we can see that the lordship and bondage relation of recognition is not some marginal point with respect to the philosophy of religion; instead, it is absolutely central to the development of the different conceptions of the divine. The conception of the divine is a mirror of the self-conception of the human beings at their given stage of cultural development. Hegel explains, “spirit is not to be defined in terms of natural phenomenon”⁴³ since this would mean reducing oneself to a natural object. Instead, according to the dialectic of recognition, one must recognize the other as a free self-conscious entity in order to be free oneself. The specific point that Hegel is making in this context is that the human being living in this early state has a contempt for dependence on nature and therefore attempts to subordinate nature. This assertion of

⁴¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 281; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 185.

⁴² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 280; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 184.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

oneself over nature takes many forms. One of these is the appeal to magic to control nature and bend it to one's will.

At the previous stage nothing greater than the individual was recognized. For this reason, it was the individual sorcerer who played the key role in commanding nature. Now for the first time there emerges the awareness of a universal power outside the individual.⁴⁴ This is the origin of the conception of the divine:

If we consider objectification more closely, we are struck by two essential relationships. On the one hand, self-consciousness still maintains itself as power over the natural realm; on the other hand, in this object self-consciousness is faced not merely with natural phenomena but with the beginnings of something independent that has its own essence. Toward such an object, then, self-consciousness has the relationship of free, unforced veneration.⁴⁵

The power of the sorcerer becomes objectified in a concrete, physical thing, which is then revered as sacred. This is the first step towards the conception of an external, independently existing deity. Hegel's idealist intuitions emerge here. The conception of the divine begins not with something from the outside but with consciousness itself. Specifically, it is an element of consciousness that is isolated and identified as what is essential and then projected or objectified in the external world. This is the beginning of the conception of the divine, but all subsequent conceptions will also be necessarily related to the human consciousness or spirit that conceives of them. This view clearly anticipates Feuerbach's theory of projection, whereby individuals project an aspect of themselves and reify it as something in the external world, and then come to forget that they did so and regard it as an objective deity apart from themselves.

This stage is more advanced than the previous one since an intermediary element arises between the individual and nature. The basic belief behind magic is still present, namely, that one can control nature, but now this control is not direct as before but rather mediated by an object: "This still falls within the sphere of magic: in it there is only the beginning of a consciousness of independent, genuinely essential objectivity."⁴⁶ In the process of objectification, it is natural that the divine is first objectified in the most rudimentary form. It is regarded as a simple object, thought to be invested with a special power: a charm. Although a mere thing, this object is thought to

⁴⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 281; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 185.

⁴⁵ Ibid. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 94; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 138: "The second element in their religion consists in their giving an outward form to this supernatural power—projecting their hidden might into the world of phenomena by means of images." Hegel's clearest account of objectification comes in his lectures from 1824; see *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 278ff.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 182ff.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 281; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 185.

have something divine domiciled within it, which allows one to use it to control and overcome nature.

This relation to an object possessed with spiritual powers is the first step on the way to self-consciousness. Now the individual can see something spiritual in the object and thus recognize a part of himself in it. Hegel explains this in a way that clearly recalls the dialectic of recognition:

Self-consciousness is for itself no longer what is unmediated, what is inwardly satisfied with itself; it is essentially what seeks and has its satisfaction in an other, through the mediation of an other, by passing through an other. In free veneration human consciousness also closes with itself, but there is a mediation present such that objects have being for it, its own essence, universal power, has being for it (and it is distinct from such power). It is only by sublating its particularity that it brings forth its own satisfaction in its essence, closes with itself as essence, and attains to itself in its essence when it surrenders its particularity; and for it to come to itself essentially in this way, it must achieve mediation through negating itself.⁴⁷

It is only by seeing oneself in the other that self-consciousness arises. Only in this way does one break out of the circle of the immediate relation to nature. The individual now realizes that his self-conception is determined by something else external to him. The individual is no longer an individual existing on his own, but his existence must be “mediated” by another. Since this other is now something external, this marks an advance over the previous stage.

2.4. THE FORMS OF OBJECTIFICATION

Initially the idea was that a human being could make a change in nature directly or in an immediate way. But, as has just been seen, the next stage is where the change is thought to take place indirectly and via the mediation of something else. But for this to happen a transformation or movement must take place from the inwardness of a human being to something outward in the external world. There is at first a conception of some supernatural power in the mind of an individual or people, and then through the process of objectification this idea becomes reified and takes on an outward form.⁴⁸ This is the beginning of the conception of the divine for Hegel. Four independent stages of objectification are traced.

In this movement one can again see the importance of the development of self-conscious recognition for Hegel’s account of religion. At this initial stage

⁴⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 281f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 185f.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 282; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 186: “As it initially appears to us, however, mediation occurs as if through some other, permanently external agent.”

full self-conscious recognition is not yet possible. But there is an awareness of the importance of external things that are needed to satisfy the individual. For this reason Hegel refers to this as the stage of appetite, which concerns humans' immediate relation to the objects of nature around them and precedes intersubjective recognition between two self-conscious individuals. The deeper sense of satisfaction that one individual finds in the recognition of another has not yet been fully developed.

(1) The first stage of objectification is simply an inanimate object that can be used as a charm. The individual no longer exercises control over nature directly but must use a charm as a means to effect the desired change. Hegel explains that there is thought to be "the power of a *tertium quid*,"⁴⁹ that is, something between humans and nature. The charm works since it can effect, by some unknown means, a change in nature. This idea stems from the dawning awareness of cause and effect relations in nature. The human mind slowly sees that individual things have wider relations to other things and can cause changes in them. The charm is thought of in a similar way; it is an object of nature and thus can affect other objects in the natural sphere. In this context, charms are used on every imaginable occasion by private individuals, families, or even peoples. Hegel names the use of charms in connection with, for example, the laying of the foundations of a house, the planting of the crops, "relations to other people, love, hate, peace, war, battles, journeys," etc.⁵⁰

The magical aspect appears here in the fact that the connection between the particular means and the desired result is not known or understood. Since the exact connection is unknown, everything potentially takes on great importance, and this opens the door to superstition. One only knows that a specific action seems to cause a certain effect, but not how it does so; thus, one begins to attach special importance to every possible surrounding circumstance associated with the action since any of them could potentially be the efficacious one. Given that the connection remains unclear, the individual charms used are arbitrary. They can be anything at all and can be discarded when they do not appear to produce the desired result.

(2) The second form of objectification is conceiving of grand objects of nature such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, or a river as a kind of charm.⁵¹ Initially these things are a matter of indifference. When everything is going well, they are not objects of great concern. However, in time the human mind comes to recognize that these entities have an effect on things, for example, in cases of earthquakes, floods, and solar and lunar eclipses. When

⁴⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 282; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 186.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 285; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 189.

⁵¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 286–8; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 190–2.

such events happen, it is thought that these large natural entities are responsible for them. Thus, they must be appealed to in order to control nature in a manner benevolent to human life and interests. This marks a further step of development in the movement of objectification: at the previous stage the charm was an object of nature over which the individual had control. It could be held in one's hand and wielded as one wished. By contrast, these natural entities are much larger and more powerful; they are independent and not under human control. For this reason, they cannot be commanded to do something, but rather they must be kindly asked to do so.

The use of these kinds of charms thus invariably takes place by means of entreaty. One entreats the object to do what one wishes to achieve. This action demonstrates the dialectical relation of recognition. In the first instance it shows that the individual is dependent upon the object.⁵² If one could do something oneself, then one would not have to entreat the other to do it. However, with the act of entreating, one also ascribes to oneself the possibility of influencing the other and thus having power over it: "the entreaty" is at the same time "the power to be exercised over the other."⁵³ There thus arises a reciprocal relation of recognition between the individual and the charm that is entreated. When one entreats objects of nature such as a river or the moon, these are often conceived to be invested with a form of spirit or *genii*, to which the appeal is made. These spiritual forces represent a transition to the next stage.

(3) The third form of objectification involves conceiving of living things as the charm.⁵⁴ Here one finds again a rudimentary form of recognition at work. This marks an advance since "Life, organic life or vitality as such, even in a tree but still more in an animal, is a higher principle than the mere nature of the sun, the river, and suchlike."⁵⁵ Animals are closer to the self-consciousness of spirit and are thus closer to the required form of recognition for the human mind: "The fact that animals are living organisms points to an active independence of subjectivity, which is what concerns us here. Organic life is in any event the form or mode of existence that is most closely related to the spiritual."⁵⁶

Animals thus resemble human life more than do stars, mountains, or rivers. Seen from this perspective, the worship of animals appears to be an advance over the worship of lifeless objects of nature. But animals are not the equals of humans, and recognition with an animal is a very poor kind of recognition. Peoples who worship animals, according to Hegel, have not yet reached an adequate self-conception: animal worship is "found wherever humanity, the

⁵² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 287; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 191.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 288–91; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 192–5. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 288; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 192.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 288; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 192.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 288; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 192f.

spiritual element, has not yet grasped itself in its genuine essentiality; thus the vitality of humanity is only free independence.”⁵⁷

These three stages all represent forms of fetishism or idol worship. This comes from the basic desire “to have an independent power standing objectively over against one.”⁵⁸ A fetish is a charm that one can have nearby in order to help one when needed. It can be most any arbitrary thing.⁵⁹ These can be personal items, the fetish or idol of a particular individual, or they can belong to entire families or peoples. Thus, it is not uncommon to see peoples associate themselves with a particular animal. One of Hegel's sources of information about fetishes is the above-mentioned work of James Kingston Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire*. There one reads the following account:

Every man has his *fetiche*, and some at least a dozen, being so many tutelary deities, against every imaginable evil that may befall them. This word is Portuguese, *feitiço*, and signifies a charm, witchcraft, magic, &c.; and what is remarkable enough, it is in universal use among all the negro tribes of the Western Coast. There is nothing so vile in nature, that it does not serve for a negro's *fetiche*; the horn, the hoof, the hair, the teeth, and the bones of all manner of quadrupeds; the feathers, beaks, claws, skulls and bones of birds; the heads and skins of snakes; the shells and fins of fishes; pieces of old iron, copper, wood, seeds of plants, and sometimes a mixture of all, or most of them, strung together. . . . [Fetishes] are considered as protections against the effects of thunder and lightning, against the attacks of the alligator, the hippopotamus, snakes, lions, tigers, &c. &c.⁶⁰

Hegel notes that these idols are prone to change due to the fact that they do not always seem to work as desired. In such cases, the given fetish is discarded and another one chosen in its stead.⁶¹ Since the cause and effect relations between the fetish and its ability to produce a desired beneficial result are unclear, every instance of its use is a test of the fetish's efficacy. But if it fails to produce the desired result, then there is no reason to keep it as a fetish since it appears impotent.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 289; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 193f.

⁵⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 290; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 194.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 290; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 195. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 725; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 614. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 94; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 138. *LPWHI*, p. 180; *VGH*, p. 222.

⁶⁰ J.K. Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, Usually Called the Congo in South Africa, in 1816*, pp. 375f. (See *Letters*, p. 496; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 473, p. 45.) This account comes from a section of the text that contains the journal of Christen Smith. This work also discusses in many places slavery in Africa, which Hegel also treats critically in his account. See Hegel, *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, p. 315; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 322f.

⁶¹ See *Phil. of Mind*, § 393, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 73: “This Higher which they feel they do not hold fast to, it is only a fugitive thought. This Higher they transfer to the first stone they come across, thus making it their fetish, and they throw this fetish away if it fails to help them.”

(4) Finally, the fourth stage of objectification involves seeing the fetish in the form of living things at the highest level, that is, in human beings. These are the magicians or sorcerers.⁶² The sorcerers or magicians are not simply any ordinary person, but rather they are special individuals who maintain a special place in the community.⁶³ These individuals are distinguished from the others by their special abilities. Often they have connections to political power. They are thought to be able to control both nature and human life.

Here the recognition that the self-conscious human agent is something higher than an object of nature or an animal is the key to its placement as the final stage of the process of objectification. This is, for Hegel, an essential point, which anticipates the development of the different religions of the world from the natural religions to the religions of spirit.⁶⁴ At this initial stage, however, the conception of the individual subject is, according to Hegel, still very rudimentary and requires further development before it can be said to be free and rational.

2.5. EARLY CONCEPTIONS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

The conception that a people has of the individual is essential for the corresponding conception of immortality. The key is what a people takes to be most important about human beings since this then will be what is isolated and celebrated as the immortal element. With death, the contingent and inessential elements are thought to be eliminated, while the most important element is thought to endure.⁶⁵ However, at this initial stage there is, according to Hegel, still no true awareness of the essential nature of spirit as immortal.

Hegel then goes on to catalogue different conceptions of immortality at this stage.⁶⁶ What these all have in common is the notion of the individual continuing to exist after the death of the physical body but in such a way that the individual is still thought to be subject to the conditions of temporal existence. For this reason, “most peoples of antiquity used to put food in the

⁶² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 291–3; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 195–7.

⁶³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 291; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 195.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 293; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 197: “Thus it is a *self-consciousness* that is venerated. The determination that *spirit* is present in humanity, and that human self-consciousness is essentially the presence of spirit—that is a conjunction we shall trace through various religions; it belongs necessarily to the first and oldest determinate religions, and we shall see that it is also present in the Christian religion, but in a more exalted fashion and transfigured.”

⁶⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 293; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 197.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 94f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 139. See also *LPWHI*, p. 181; *VGH*, p. 223.

graves of the dead.”⁶⁷ Hegel cites one account of an African tribe that believes that the dead feel hunger and thirst and thus must be appeased by offerings of food and drink.⁶⁸ The idea is that, although they are dead, they are still wholly bound up in the world of the senses and not of spirit. For Hegel, this is an unworthy representation of immortality. He explains this as follows:

Death is portrayed as the stripping off of the empirical, outward existence; but the dead retain their whole contingent nature. Objectification still relates wholly to the external mode, is still wholly formal; the mode of objectifying is not yet the essential, what is accounted as having being and what survives is still the contingent nature. Even the duration thus vouchsafed to the dead is a superficial characteristic.⁶⁹

Thus, although the dead are conceived as enduring through time, their mode of existence is not anything greater than the empirical, physical body that they had while they were still alive. The spirits endure temporally, but they are not transformed into something higher. Although the dead are conceived as spirit, the fact that they still require blood or food and drink is indication that they are still physical or material and not purely spiritual.

For Hegel, this conception of the dead is a mirror image of the conception of human life among these peoples. He conveys a highly dubious report from Cavazzi about a ceremony performed by a magician in a tribe in the Congo intended to appease the spirits of the dead. The dead are conceived to be angry and vindictive vis-à-vis their living relations who have neglected to provide them with the sustenance that they require: food, water, and blood. During the ceremony, the spirit of the deceased enters into the body of the magician or “singhili,” who then curses and threatens those present.⁷⁰ For Hegel, the nature of the ceremony speaks volumes about the conception of human beings among the members of the tribe in question. The dead spirits are conceived of as backbiting and malicious and not as loving, elevated individuals. The afterlife is thought of merely as an opportunity to take revenge and not as a sublime state. This is, to the modern mindset, a very foreign conception of what it is to be a human being. At this stage the conception of immortality is, according to Hegel, very impoverished since the conception of the individual remains undeveloped. Hegel explains:

The image of immortality is intimately bound up with that of God. The higher the plane on which human nature is affirmed, and the more the power of spirituality

⁶⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 294; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 198.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 296; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 200.

⁷⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 295; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 199. See Cavazzi, *Historische Beschreibung der in dem untern Occidentalischen Mohrenland ligenden drey Königreichen, Congo, Matamba, und Angola*, pp. 261f.

is comprehended according to its genuine content, in eternal fashion, the worthier is the image of God and that of Spirit, of the human individual.⁷¹

Here one can see right away that, despite the longstanding claims that Hegel has no theory of immortality, he in fact is keenly interested in this issue, and, moreover, it constitutes a central aspect of the long story that he wants to tell about the development of the religions of the world. At this early stage the idea of human beings is that of merely physical beings, and this is reflected in the conception of immortality at this stage.

As another example of the impoverished conception of anthropology at this stage, Hegel cites the widespread institution of slavery in Africa. He believes that this clearly evidences the low premium that was put on human life and dignity.⁷² Given this view, it is for Hegel natural that there will be no higher conception of immortality than the one depicted above. The true conception of immortality only arises “when humanity appears as inwardly free, and in and for itself.”⁷³ Here one can see the development of human freedom in history playing its role in the religious conceptions of different peoples.⁷⁴

2.6. THE TRANSITION TO THE CHINESE RELIGION

The focus at the initial stage is what is an object of sense and appetite, that is, particulars, and there is lacking a conception of the universal. At this early stage of religious development magic is what is highest in the self-consciousness of people. This highest principle of consciousness becomes the kernel of the idea of a god or divinity, when it is projected out into the world. Instead of it merely being a special faculty or skill of a specific shaman or magician, it is now a characteristic of an external, objective being outside the individual. The principle is given the form of an independent living, existing entity, or what Hegel calls “universal spirituality,”⁷⁵ and this is the beginning of true religion. From the individual with magical powers, the universal, the divine, must emerge from the individual. The movement from the individual magician to the conception of a god takes place by means of the process of objectification. The power of the magician is transferred to an external object, a fetish, and from there to an independent entity, a deity.

Hegel places the Eskimos, whom he regards as having virtually no real religion at all, at the lowest possible level of the development of the religious

⁷¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 297; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 201.

⁷² Ibid. *LPWHI*, p. 183; *VGH*, p. 225.

⁷³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 297; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 202.

⁷⁴ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 197; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 100: “There is no slavery in the state that is rational; slavery is found only where spirit has not yet attained this point.”

⁷⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 273; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 177.

consciousness. The Eskimos have very little that could be understood as a conception of a god or divinity. Put in its historical content this is interesting since much of the then current development in religious thinking coming out of the Enlightenment likewise tended to minimize the traditional conceptions of God and to water them down into a very minimal notion of a rather abstract divinity. This seems to be a case where opposites converge. In other words, what the figures of the Enlightenment regarded as a great advance in religious thinking and indeed as the most modern conception of the divine, Hegel regarded as similar to the earliest. The Enlightenment's reduction of God to an abstraction with no meaningful context was, in Hegel's eyes, just as hopeless as the Eskimos' inability to form any idea of a divinity or an afterlife since they were so fixated on the empirical world around them.

Chinese Religion

The Religion of Measure

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel places the religion of ancient China at the very beginning as the first genuine religion in the historical sequence of the world religions.¹ This is generally consistent with his other treatments of China in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where special chapters are dedicated to Chinese history and philosophy respectively.² In both of these lectures the account of China appears in preliminary chapters preceding the actual treatment of the main subject matter. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* China is considered to be stagnant and to lie outside the mainstream of historical development. Likewise, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* ancient Chinese philosophy is not regarded as genuinely philosophical and is thus excluded from the canon of philosophy that begins with the Greeks. Hegel's account of China's religion is only slightly more positive than these two other accounts of Chinese culture. According to Hegel, the Chinese religion ranks just above the preliminary stage of magic. Its role at the beginning of the historical sequence means that it is the most rudimentary of all of the religions.

The development of Hegel's understanding of the different aspects and movements in ancient Chinese religion can be traced in his different lecture courses on the philosophy of religion. There is no account of China as an independent section in Hegel's lecture manuscript from 1821. The first such account appears in his course from 1824, where he gives a very brief and indeed superficial treatment of his subject, drawing on a single source and

¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 299–303; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 203–7. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 547–62; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 445–58. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 729–31; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 618–19. *NR*, pp. 105–19. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, pp. 315–49; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 342–54.

² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 116–38; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 163–91. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 211–50; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 121–64. *OW*, pp. 275–342. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 119–25; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 154–60.

examining only one aspect, namely, the state religion of the Zhou.³ But then his course for 1827 shows that his knowledge has substantially increased, and his account is richer and better informed.⁴ His presentation changes yet again in the 1831 lectures, but his analysis there is rather terse and undeveloped.⁵ This might be the reason why Marheineke chose to omit Hegel's account of China in his edition of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* from 1832, where he places "magic" as the first religion in the historical sequence. It was only with Marheineke's second edition in 1840 that the religion of ancient China was given its own rubric and independent section.⁶

Hegel's analysis of the religion of ancient China presents some interpretive difficulties due primarily to his lack of clarity about what specific Chinese religion he is discussing. He refers to Taoism⁷ and Confucianism,⁸ but it seems that the main reference in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is to the state religion that was introduced by the Zhou Dynasty, which ruled ancient China from 1045 BC to 256 BC.⁹ The Zhou defeated the Shang Dynasty and instituted a number of religious reforms. They introduced the idea of an impersonal deity named Tian, which represents a universal force of nature or the universe. In an effort to claim a special divine mandate for their dynasty, the Zhou conceived the emperor as having a unique relation to this deity, which had entrusted him with ruling the world. The emperor is thus regarded as the "Son of Heaven." Hegel describes this in some detail based on an article by the French missionary Jean Joseph Marie Amiot (1718–93), "Sur La Secte des Tao-sée," which appeared in volume 15 of *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, an extensive work published by Jesuit missionaries in Peking.¹⁰

³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 299–303; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 203–7.

⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 547–62; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 445–58.

⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 729–31; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 618–19.

⁶ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, I–II, ed. by Philipp Marheineke, vols 11–12 [2nd ed., 1840], in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, vols 1–18, ed. by Ludwig Boumann, Friedrich Förster, Eduard Gans, Karl Hegel, Leopold von Henning, Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Philipp Marheineke, Karl Ludwig Michelet, Karl Rosenkranz, Johannes Schulze, Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot 1832–45, vol. 11, pp. 326–38. (*Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, pp. 315–49; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 342–54.)

⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 556ff.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 454ff. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 136; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 188. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 124f.; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 159f.

⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 558; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 455. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 136; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 188. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 120–1; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 155–6.

⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 299, note 172.

¹⁰ [Jean Joseph Marie Amiot], "Extrait d'une lettre de M. Amiot, Missionnaire, écrite de Péking, le 16 Octobre 1787. Sur La Secte des Tao-sée," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vols 1–16, Paris: Nyon l'aîné et fils 1776–1814, vol. 15, pp. 208–59. (See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 300–3; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 204–7. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 552–5; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 448–53. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 121; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 156. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 124; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 159. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 125; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 159.)

In his discussion of the state religion of the Zhou in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel also mentions Taoism and Confucianism and acknowledges that these are further religious developments that occurred over time. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he is more careful to distinguish Taoism and Confucianism as independent movements.¹¹ In any case, it should be noted that both Lao-tzu, the founder of Taoism, and Confucius lived during the Zhou Dynasty, which marked the beginning of classical Chinese philosophy in the 6th century BC. Perhaps Hegel's view is that what he designates as "the Chinese religion" is intended to cover a number of different religious movements that were animated by the Chinese spirit during this period. The oddity, however, is that in his other analyses of the world's religions he tends to treat only one religion or belief system at a time and not to combine them in the way he does here. In any case, the key point is that the Chinese had, for Hegel, a very undeveloped conception of the self or the individual, and this is characteristic of all the forms of religion that he discusses under the rubric of the religions of nature.

There is evidence that Hegel had an intensive interest in China, which even his editors regarded as somewhat excessive. In the Preface to his edition of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Eduard Gans (1797–1839) indicates that when Hegel initially gave this lecture course, he spent a disproportional amount of time on China. Gans states that as editor he was obliged to reduce this material.¹² (Some of it was restored in Lasson's edition, where the treatment of China is thus considerably more extensive.)¹³ Given this, there can be no doubt that, whatever his assessment of China ultimately was, Hegel was fascinated by Chinese history and culture generally.

3.1. THE STATE OF SINOLOGY IN HEGEL'S TIME

By Hegel's time Europe had of course known about China for many centuries. Marco Polo's journey to China in the thirteenth century brought this vast and

¹¹ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 119–25; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 154–60.

¹² *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Eduard Gans, vol. 9 [1837], in *Hegel's Werke*, p. XVII: "In the first delivery of his lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel devoted a full third of his time to the Introduction and to China—a part of the work which was elaborated with wearisome prolixity. Although in subsequent deliveries he was less circumstantial in regard to this Empire, the editor was obliged to reduce the description to such proportions as would prevent the Chinese section from encroaching upon, and consequently prejudicing the treatment of, the other parts of the work." See the useful reprint of Sibree's translation of this Preface in Michael Hoffheimer, *Eduard Gans and the Hegelian Philosophy of Law*, Dordrecht et al.: Kluwer Academic Publishers 1995, pp. 97–106; p. 104. See also Robert Bernasconi, "With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Eurocentrism," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, vol. 22, 2000, p. 173.

¹³ Hegel, *OW*, pp. 275–342.

populous empire to the attention of the Europeans, although his accounts were often dismissed as imaginary tales. Regular commerce between China and Europe began in the sixteenth century when the Portuguese set up a trading center in Macao. After a stint in India, the Italian Jesuits Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) came to Macao (in 1578 and 1582 respectively) as the first missionaries in China.¹⁴ They learned the language, took on Chinese names, and adopted Chinese dress and customs. They travelled to mainland China and established themselves in Zhaoqing, in time making their way to the capital Peking. The Jesuits gradually found favor among the Chinese political authorities, and toward the end of his life Ricci was appointed as an advisor to the emperor in Peking. The missionaries were faced with a difficult task since the Chinese were suspicious of foreigners and felt that they had nothing to learn from them. The missionaries had to be cautious about stating directly the nature of their reason for being in China. Instead, they had to feign that they had come to the country to revere the emperor and admire his sage rule, while learning about Chinese culture. Instead of trying to impose Christianity on the Chinese, as it were, as something foreign from the outside, the missionaries made it their project to learn everything they could about Chinese religion and philosophy and to argue that Christianity was already implicitly contained in it. This policy of accommodation did not sit well with the more conservative forces in Rome.¹⁵

While their ultimate goal was to learn about Chinese culture in order to convert the Chinese to Christianity, the Jesuits, with their publications, also served to introduce China to Europe. The Jesuits were themselves genuinely interested in Chinese history and culture, and diligently translated important Chinese texts into European languages. They were responsible for the promulgation of information about China from this fairly early period around the beginning of the seventeenth century. Classic Chinese texts of religion, history, and literature, such as the *I Ching*, the *Shujing*, and the *Shi King* fascinated European readers.¹⁶ These translations had an effect on European philosophy

¹⁴ See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1979, pp. 162–6. John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 1983, pp. 25–9. For useful overviews of the Jesuit mission in China, see George H. Dunne, S.J., *Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1962. Arnold H. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1942. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1929.

¹⁵ See David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1989.

¹⁶ Hegel was also familiar with these works. See *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 116–17; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 164–5. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 126; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 177. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 133; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 185. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 136; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 188. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 137; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 189.

and letters.¹⁷ Authors such as Voltaire used the image of China as a mirror to criticize current religious practices in Europe.¹⁸ Leibniz studied the *I Ching* and was fascinated by the Chinese language and writing.¹⁹ This intellectual interest in China was accompanied by a more popular one. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a period of sinophilia in Europe.²⁰ This movement was widely the result of the efforts of the missionaries to make China known in the West.

This generally positive view of Chinese culture began to fade in time. At the end of the eighteenth century Lord Macartney (that is, George Macartney, 1st Earl Macartney (1737–1806)) was sent on an embassy to Peking as the first British envoy to China. In 1792 he met with the emperor, but the attempt to establish good diplomatic relations between Britain and China was unsuccessful. This was nonetheless an important event that marked a renewed and somewhat different, more pernicious European interest in China. As long as the positive view of China promoted by the Jesuits was dominant in the eighteenth century, Europeans were captivated by a sense of the exotic and the foreign. But as the Chinese Empire began its swift decline that continued throughout the nineteenth century, negative portrayals came to challenge the earlier Jesuit accounts.²¹ Moreover, the picture of China was also clouded by the colonial interests of the Europeans and primarily the British during Hegel's time. Instead of China being a model for Europe to emulate, it became regarded as the object of disdain for what was thought to be its despotism and backwards customs. Hegel was familiar with Macartney's embassy, which he refers to explicitly.²² His source for this was George Leonard Staunton's

¹⁷ See Colin MacKerras, *Western Images of China*, Hong Kong, et al.: Oxford University Press 1989, pp. 37–42. Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)*, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner 1932.

¹⁸ See Voltaire, *La Philosophie de l'histoire*, Geneva: Aux dépends de l'auteur 1765, pp. 126–36. (English translation, *The Philosophy of History*, London: Thomas North 1829, pp. 106–14.) See also his *Abregé de l'histoire universelle, depuis Charlemagne, jusques à Charlequin*, vols 1–2, London: Jean Nourse 1753, vol. 1, pp. 1–25. (English translation, *An Essay on Universal History, the Manners, and Spirit of Nations from the Reign of Charlemaign to the Age of Lewis XIV*, trans. by Mr. Nugent, vols 1–4, 2nd ed., London: J. Nourse 1759, vol. 1, pp. 10–30.)

¹⁹ See Hegel's reference to this: *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 135; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 187. *Phil. of Mind*, § 459, p. 215; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 348. For Leibniz's interest in China see Franklin Perkins, *Leibniz and China: A Commerce of Light*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004, David E. Mungello, *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for Accord*, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii 1977, and Rita Widmaier, *Die Rolle der chinesischen Schrift in Leibniz' Zeichentheorie*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner 1983 (*Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa*, vol. 24).

²⁰ See Adolf Reichwein, *China and Europe: Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1925. William W. Appleton, *A Cycle of Cathay: The Chinese Vogue in England during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, New York: Columbia University Press 1951.

²¹ See MacKerras, *Western Images of China*, pp. 43–65.

²² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 122; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 170. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 133; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 184. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 191; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 256. *OW*, p. 291, p. 303, p. 328, p. 448. *Phil. of Mind*, § 459, p. 215; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 348.

(1737–1801) three-volume *An Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* from 1797.²³ This work still retains some of the positive spirit of the earlier accounts of China.

France was the leader in scholarship on China during Hegel's time. By contrast, in Prussia and the German states during this period, Sinology lagged well behind Indology.²⁴ While the first professorship for Sanskrit was created in 1818, it was only in 1887 that Chinese was taught at a German-speaking university. The German scholars were intrigued by the discovery of the relation between Sanskrit and the German language. By contrast, no such connection existed to Chinese, and the Chinese pictographs were derided as a lower form of linguistic development.

Hegel read most of the materials on China that were available in French and Latin. With respect to sources, in general it can be safely claimed that the amount of information about China that was available to him was far more extensive than for any other non-Western people that he treats.²⁵ While Indology and Egyptology were relatively new fields in Hegel's time, there had been detailed studies of China since the seventeenth century due to the work of the missionaries. Hegel was indeed comparatively well informed about ancient China due to this ready access to information about the latest research in Sinology at the time.

Hegel's sources of information about China were varied. He read travel reports such as the multi-volume *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande; oder Sammlung aller Reisebeschreibungen* (produced by Johann Joachim Schwabe (1714–84)), of which volumes 6–7 are dedicated to China. This work was a translation of two series: *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (in four volumes from 1745–47), edited by Braddock Mead (c. 1685–1757) under the pseudonym John Green, and *Histoire générale des voyages* (in twenty volumes from 1746–91), edited by Antoine-François Prévost (1697–1763).²⁶ Also in this genre is the sixteen-volume *Die wichtigsten*

²³ George Staunton, *An Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, vols 1–3, London: G. Nicol 1797. (This work also appeared in German translation, but it is not clear if Hegel used it or the English original: *Reise der englischen Gesandtschaft an den Kaiser von China, in den Jahren 1792 und 1793*, vols 1–2, trans. by Johann Christian Hüttner, Zürich: Heinrich Geßner 1798–99.) See *Phil. of Mind*, § 459, p. 215; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 348.

²⁴ See Douglas T. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany*, Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2009, pp. 91–2.

²⁵ For Hegel's sources see the "Editorial Introduction" in *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 5, pp. 15–17, p. 36, pp. 59–60, p. 76.

²⁶ *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande; oder Sammlung aller Reisebeschreibungen*, vols 1–21, Leipzig: Heinrich Merkus 1747–74. (This work is a translation of *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vols 1–4, ed. by John Green, London: Thomas Astley 1745–7. *Histoire générale des voyages*, vols 1–15, ed. by Antoine-François Prévost, Paris: Didot 1746–59. This work was continued by other scholars.) See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 307, note 190; *VPR*, Part 2b, p. 710, Anmerkung 211,47–9.

neueren Land- und Seereisen (1821–32) by Wilhelm Harnish (1787–1864).²⁷ Hegel also made use of what were in effect standard reference works at the time such as the thirteen-volume *Histoire générale de la Chine* (1777–85), the work of the French Jesuit missionary, Joseph-Anne-Marie de Moriac de Mailla (1669–1748).²⁸ As noted, he also availed himself of the Jesuits' *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*.²⁹ In addition to the article mentioned above, he also refers to another long piece by Amiot entitled "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens."³⁰ In the title Amiot uses "monumens" to mean not so much physical monuments but rather cultural ones such as the *I Ching*, which he explicates at some length. Hegel refers to yet another article by an anonymous author (perhaps Amiot yet again), designated simply as "le révérend pere**** de la Compagnie de Jesus," which discusses the Chinese language and system of writing.³¹ This article critically takes up the discussion about the possible relation of the Chinese writing to the Egyptian hieroglyphs, which at the time were still undeciphered.

Hegel's knowledge of the thought of Lao-tzu and Taoism largely came from the works of the French sinologist, Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832), who was a major figure in the field. Largely self-taught, Abel-Rémusat was appointed to the first chair of Chinese at the Collège de France in 1814. He created the first Chinese grammar and founded the Société Asiatique in 1822. It was his work that largely set the stage for future Sinology.³² Hegel met Abel-Rémusat in person during his trip to Paris in 1827.³³ In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel refers explicitly to Abel-Rémusat's *Mémoire sur la vie et les opinions de Lao-Tseu*.³⁴ This work gives an account of Lao-tzu's

²⁷ Wilhelm Harnisch, *Die wichtigsten neueren Land- und Seereisen*, vols 1–16, Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer 1821–32. See LPR, vol. 2, p. 307, note 190; VPR, Part 2b, p. 710, Anmerkung 211,47–9. VPR, Part 2b, p. 721, Anmerkung 245.869–77. VPR, Part 2b, p. 766, Anmerkung 474, 421–35. VPR, Part 2b, p. 803, Anmerkung 622,408–9.

²⁸ Joseph-Anne-Marie de Moyriac de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine ou Annales de cet Empire; traduites du Tong-Kien-Kang-Mou*, vols 1–13, Paris: D. Pierres and Clousier 1777–85.

²⁹ *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vols 1–16, Paris: Nyon l'aine et fils 1776–1814.

³⁰ [Jean Joseph Marie Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, pp. 5–364. (See Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 121; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 156.)

³¹ [anonymous], "Lettre sur les caracteres chinois," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 1, pp. 275–323. (See Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 125; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 160.)

³² See Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, New York: Columbia University Press 1984, p. 65.

³³ Hegel, *Letters*, p. 655; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 562, p. 189.

³⁴ Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat, *Mémoire sur la vie et les opinions de Lao-Tseu*, Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale 1823. (*Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 124; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 159.) See also Julius Heinrich Klapproth, [review of] "Mémoire sur l'origine la propagation de la doctrine du Tao fondée par Lao

Tao-te Ching and tries to make the case that Lao-tzu first gave expression to doctrines that were later known among ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Pythagoras. Moreover, Hegel claims to have seen manuscripts or translations of the works of Lao-tzu, when he visited Vienna in 1824.³⁵

Hegel was familiar with the teachings of Confucius through the work of the Baptist missionary and orientalist Joshua Marshman (1768–1837). In 1809 Marshman published *The Works of Confucius*,³⁶ which begins with a short life of Confucius and an account of his writings. It then presents a translation of the *Analects* or the *Lun Yu*. Hegel also made use of the influential *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* from 1687,³⁷ which presented the life and thought of Confucius to the European reader for the first time. This was a collective project by a group of Jesuit missionaries aided by their Chinese assistants, who produced the text over a rather extended period of time. On the title page appear the names of the missionaries Philippe Couplet (1623–93), Prospero Intorcetta (1626–96), François de Rougemont (1624–76), and Christian Wolfgang Herdtrich (1625–84). This work has been described as “one of the supreme achievements of Jesuit accommodative scholarship in China,”³⁸ due to its attempt to unify Confucianism and Christianity. In addition to a long introduction, this text contained Latin translations of three of the “Four Books” of Confucianism, the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and the *Analects*. This work was read by the leading intellectuals in Europe including Leibniz.³⁹ Hegel refers to this in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.⁴⁰

He also seems to have used a French translation from 1770 of the *Shujing* or the *Book of Documents*, that is, the annals of the Chinese Empire.⁴¹ In Hegel's time this collection was thought to be made by Confucius, but later scholarship has called this into question. The work consists primarily of a series of

Tseu,” in *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*, Tome 7, 1831, pp. 465–93 (*Hegel's Library*, 791). (This is a book review of *Mémoire sur l'origine la propagation de la doctrine du Tao fondée par Lao Tseu; traduit du Chinois... par M.G. Pauthier*, Paris: Dondey-Dupré 1831.)

³⁵ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 124; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 159: “We still have his principal work, and in Vienna it has been translated; I have seen it there myself.” Hegel here presumably refers to the *Tao-te-ching*. Hegel visited numerous collections of art and antiquities while he was in Vienna, and it remains undetermined which of these contained the mentioned Lao-tzu manuscript.

³⁶ Joshua Marshman, *The Works of Confucius; Containing the Original Text, with a Translation*, vol. 1, Serampore: Printed at the Mission Press 1809. (See Hegel, *OW*, p. 315. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 730n; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 619n.)

³⁷ Prospero Intorcetta, Christian Herdtrich, François Rougemont, Philippe Couplet, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive scientia sinensis latine exposita*, Paris: Daniel Horthemels 1687. For an account of this influential work, see Mungello, *Curious Land*, pp. 247–99.

³⁸ Mungello, *Curious Land*, p. 247.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 287–92.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 121; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 156.

⁴¹ *Le Chou-king, un des livres sacrés des Chinois, Qui renferme les Fondements de leur ancienne Histoire, les Principes de leur Gouvernement & de leur Morale: Overage recueilli par Confucius*, trans. by Antoine Gaubil, revised by Joseph de Guignes, Paris: N.M. Tilliard 1770.

speeches by kings and other political leaders. Of interest to Hegel was presumably the material relevant for the Zhou Dynasty. The translation that Hegel used, *Le Chou-king, un des livres sacrés des Chinois*, is the work of the French Jesuit missionary Antoine Gaubil (1689–1759).

It is quite possible that Hegel also read Herder's account of ancient China in *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–91).⁴² Herder was a major figure in the early German reception of the culture of the East.⁴³ He anticipates Hegel's criticism of the Chinese for lacking subjective freedom. According to Herder, this can be seen in the system of filial obedience, which dictates that grown adults give their parents and the emperor the kind of respect that one would expect from children.⁴⁴ Like Hegel, Herder sees in China a state that has reached a point of stagnation due to a lack of reflection and intellectual interest in innovation.⁴⁵ Proud and self-satisfied with their customs and traditions, the Chinese, according to Herder, are unable to see what they could learn from the outside world. He describes theirs as a moribund culture, an "embalmed mummy, wrapped in silk."⁴⁶ Herder's rather negative assessment of China contrasts with his enthusiasm for ancient India.

In his account of China in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel also refers to the first volume of Karl Joseph Hieronymus Windischmann's *Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte*, that is, *Die Grundlagen der Philosophie im Morgenland*.⁴⁷ Windischmann (1775–1839) was a professor of philosophy and medicine at the University of Bonn, who had written an

⁴² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vols 1–4, Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1784–91 (English translation: *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vols 1–2, trans. by T. Churchill, 2nd ed., London: J. Johnson 1803.) For Herder, see Nicholas A. Germana, *The Orient of Europe: The Mythical Image of India and Competing Images of German National Identity*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009, pp. 41–50.

⁴³ See René Gérard, "Herder et l'orient," in his *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, Nancy: Georges Thomas 1963, pp. 3–67. Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 2004, pp. 64–83. Leo Kreutzer, "Johann Gottfried Herders 'Geschichtspantheismus' als Denkmodell für einen anderen Orientalismus," in *Der Deutschen Morgenland. Bilder des Orients in der deutschen Literatur und Kultur von 1770 bis 1850*, ed. by Charis Goer and Michael Hofmann, Munich: Wilhelm Fink 2008, pp. 57–65.

⁴⁴ Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 14. *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 11: "If the full grown man be compelled to yield the obedience of a child; he must give up all that freedom of action, which nature has made the duty of his years."

⁴⁵ Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 16. *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 17. *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Carl Joseph Hieronymus Windischmann, *Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte*, Erster Theil, *Die Grundlagen der Philosophie im Morgenland*, Erste Abtheilung, Bonn: Adolph Marcus 1827. (See *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 123; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 158.) This work remained unfinished.

appreciative review of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1809.⁴⁸ Although they corresponded earlier,⁴⁹ they only met in person in 1822, when Hegel visited him in Bonn on his way to Holland and Belgium. Windischmann had been influenced by Hegel's philosophy of history, and his unfulfilled goal with *Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte* was to justify Christianity. But the work also contains extensive information about the Zhou Dynasty and Chinese religion generally. All in all it must be said that Hegel had a plentitude of sources about the culture of China that spanned a number of different fields.

3.2. THE DIVINE AS TIAN

According to Hegel, the basic concept in the Zhou religion is the notion of the divine as an absolute, universal power, referred to as "Tian" (or "T'ien"). In contrast to the stage of magic, human subjects now conceive of themselves as separate from this power that they identify with the natural world generally.⁵⁰ In the religion of the Zhou, Tian, translated as "heaven" or the "cosmos," or perhaps more literally simply as "sky," represents the idea of the abstract, impersonal god or the world of nature. In Amiot's above-mentioned article "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," the term is explained as follows: "*le mot de Tien ne peut signifier là que le Ciel matériel & visible, ou ce que, dans le langage ordinaire, nous appellons le firmament.*"⁵¹ Amiot thus clearly distinguishes this conception of the divine from the Judeo-Christian conception, where it is God, a self-conscious entity, who creates the world and thus the firmament. It is conceived as the collection of the power of the physical universe with no element of self-consciousness. It is not the particular force of an earthquake, the rain, or some other physical entity, but all of these combined. A similar account can be found in another of Hegel's sources, the work of the Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Grosier (1743–1823), *Description générale de la Chine*, from 1785–87: the Chinese have "*l'idée d'un Etre*

⁴⁸ Carl Joseph Hieronymus Windischmann, "Bamberg u. Würzburg, b. Göbhardt: G. W. Fr. Hegel, D. und Prof. der Philos. zu Jena (nunmehr Rectors in Nürnberg), *System der Wissenschaft*. I Theil. Die Phänomenologie des Geistes. 1807. XCI u. 765 S. gr. 8. (3 Thlr. 8 Gr.)," *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, nos. 31–4, 1809, columns 241–72.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Briefe*, vol. 1, letter 155, pp. 306–9. *Letters*, pp. 560–1; *Briefe*, vol. 1, letter 158, pp. 313–15. *Briefe*, vol. 1, letter 159, pp. 315–16. *Briefe*, vol. 1, letter 163, pp. 323–4. *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 453, pp. 16–17. *Letters*, pp. 562–3; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 459, pp. 25–7. *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 465, pp. 33–5. *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 467, pp. 36–7. *Letters*, pp. 564–5; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 470, pp. 39–42. *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 475, pp. 46–8. *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 500, pp. 98–9. *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 605, pp. 265–7.

⁵⁰ See LPR, vol. 2, pp. 548f.; VPR, Part 2, pp. 446f. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 244; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 158.

⁵¹ [Jean Joseph Marie Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, p. 33.

suprême, créateur & conservateur de toutes choses. Ils le désignent sous les noms de Tien, Ciel... Cet Etre souverain... est le principe de tout ce qui existe, le père de tous les hommes; il est éternel, immuable, indépendant; sa puissance ne connoît point de bornes."⁵² Hegel explains, "Tian designates wholly indeterminate and abstract universality; it is the wholly indeterminate sum of the physical and moral nexus as a whole."⁵³ It is hard not to see in this a parallel to the beginning of Hegel's metaphysics in the *Science of Logic* with the category of pure being.

Hegel further indicates that this conception of the divine as Tian covers not just all the natural forces but also the basic principles of morals and society. The world of human beings is thus conceived as an extension of that of nature. The natural and the human world are intimately connected, and events in the one inevitably affect events in the other. Thus, the idea of Tian is not to be conceived either as a purely natural force as in the pagan religions or as a transcendent heaven as in the Christian tradition.

Since one of Hegel's main sources of information is the work of the Jesuit missionaries in China, he notes their ideological attempt to use the concept of Tian to mean "God" and thus to associate this abstract conception of the deity with the Christian God.⁵⁴ He explains that the Jesuits were rebuked for this since, as noted, the former is not conceived as a self-conscious entity but rather represents nature in general:

Heaven has therefore no higher meaning than nature. The Jesuits indeed, yielded to Chinese notions so far as to call the Christian God "Heaven"—"Tian"; but they were on that account accused to the Pope by other Christian Orders. The Pope consequently sent a cardinal to China, who died there. A bishop who was subsequently dispatched, enacted that instead of "heaven," the term "Lord of Heaven" should be adopted.⁵⁵

At the heart of the conflict, which came to be known as the Rites Controversy,⁵⁶ was the above-mentioned question of the Jesuits' policy of accommodation in their missionary strategy.

⁵² Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Grosier, *Description générale de la Chine, ou Tableau de l'état actuel de cet empire*, vols 1–2, Paris: Moutard 1785–7, vol. 1, p. 543. (See LPWH, vol. 1, pp. 212–13 note; VPWG, vol. 1, pp. 538–40, note 121, 22. See also OW, p. 283.)

⁵³ Hegel, LPR, vol. 2, p. 549; VPR, Part 2, p. 446. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 247; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 162.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 122; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 158: "The Heavens to the Chinese means what is highest, and it has been a great source of division amongst the missionaries whether they ought to call the Christian God, Tian, or not."

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 132; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 183. See also *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 122; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 158: "The Heavens to the Chinese means what is highest, and it has been a great source of division amongst the missionaries whether they ought to call the Christian God, Tien, or not." See also LPWH, vol. 1, p. 244; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 158.

⁵⁶ See Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China*, pp. 119–75. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, pp. 131–55.

Hegel claims that this conception of heaven, since it is effectively equivalent with nature, is still closely connected to the earth and thus not conceived as some transcendent place in the way in which heaven is traditionally conceived in Christianity. He explains:

the Heaven of the Chinese is not a world that forms an independent realm above the earth (as we picture it with angels and the souls of the departed, or in the way the Greek Olympus is distinct from life on earth). On the contrary, everything is upon earth, and everything that has power is subject to the emperor.⁵⁷

One should therefore resist the temptation to understand Tian as an analogue to the Christian heaven, which is conceived as being a transcendent place far beyond the mundane realm.

3.3. THE EMPEROR

As noted above, the religious reforms introduced by the Zhou Dynasty were designed to help solidify the dynasty's newly won power. The role of the emperor was supremely important here since it was decisive that he be perceived as the legitimate ruler and not a usurper. This was known as the "mandate of heaven," a doctrine similar to the divine right of kings, and it was first developed by the Zhou Dynasty. The Zhou thus gave the emperor the title of the "Son of Heaven" (Tianzi),⁵⁸ which was meant to imply that he had a special relation to the divinity Tian, from which he received his mandate to rule. The mandate of heaven was, however, conditional on the ruler acting justly and ruling well. Only in this way could he maintain the favor of the divine. When a ruler was overthrown, this was taken as a sign that he had failed and had thus fallen out of favor. It should be noted that while Hegel consistently talks about the role of the "emperor" in connection with this period of Chinese history, this seems to be anachronistic. The Zhou ruled as kings,⁵⁹ and the last of the kings in their line, Nan, was defeated by the Kingdom of Qin in 256 BC. These events were a part of the beginning of the unification of China under the Qin and thus marked the beginning of the Imperial Era of Chinese history with Qin Shi Huang becoming the first Emperor of China and the founder of the short-lived Qin Dynasty (in 221 BC).

According to Hegel's narrative, the Chinese emperor in a sense takes over the role of the magician or sorcerer discussed in the previous chapter. There is

⁵⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 550n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 447n.

⁵⁸ See Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Asia Center and Harvard University Press 2000, p. 108.

⁵⁹ During the Zhou Dynasty, rulers of the Chinese states were called Wang, which meant "king" or "chief," literally "big man." See Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, p. 108.

some historical evidence for the connection between sorcery and the Chinese religion since China had a long tradition of shamanism and magic, and this tradition influenced the development of Chinese philosophy and religion, not least of all Taoism.⁶⁰ Like the sorcerer, the emperor has a special power to exert influence over nature. Like the sorcerer he enjoys a special relation to the divine force, Tian, that the others do not have. He governs not just all human affairs but also the affairs of nature in this mundane sphere.⁶¹ Since the emperor has this special relation, he acts as a kind of mediator between the people and Tian. He does this not just in his own person but also by virtue of the institutions of government that he creates and oversees.⁶²

The emperor thus plays a very special role in this religion since he alone has this special relation to the divine. Only he has the right to worship Tian directly and publicly, while the others relate to it only through him. He alone has the right to address himself to the divine directly: "The emperor, as crown of all—the embodiment of power—alone approaches Heaven; individuals, as such, enjoy no such privilege. He it is, who presents the offerings at the four feasts; gives thanks at the head of his court, for the harvest, and invokes blessings on the sowing of the seed."⁶³ For this reason the emperor plays a central role in various religious ceremonies.⁶⁴

Since the emperor is so important for religion, the government and administration are irrevocably intertwined with religious practice: "Maintenance of the laws is the prerogative of the emperor, of the emperor as the son of heaven, which is the whole, the totality of measures."⁶⁵ Here Hegel seems to draw on the description of the role of the emperor given by Amiot.⁶⁶ He continues,

⁶⁰ See Eva Wong, *The Shambhala Guide to Taoism*, Boston and London: Shambhala 1997, pp. 11–19.

⁶¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 549; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 446.

⁶² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 131; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 182: "The Chinese in their patriarchal despotism need no such connection or mediation with the Highest Being; for education, the laws of morality and courtesy, and the commands and government of the emperor embody all such connection and mediation as far as they feel the need of it."

⁶³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 132; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 183. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 246; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 160.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 549f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 446f. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 246; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 160.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 551n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 449n.

⁶⁶ See [Amiot], "Extrait d'une lettre de M. Amiot, Missionnaire, écrite de Péking, le 16 Octobre 1787. Sur La Secte des Tao-sée," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vols 1–16, Paris: Nyon l'aîné et fils 1776–1814, see vol. 15, p. 215: "Le Souverain des Chinois passe dans l'esprit de ses sujets pour être le Souverain des Souverains. Son Empire n'a de bornes que les quatre mers, ainsi qu'ils s'expriment; c'est le Tien-hia, c'est-à-dire, c'est l'Empire de tout ce qui est sous le ciel visible. Dans cette supposition, c'est à lui qu'appartient le droit de régler sur la terre, tout ce qui a un rapport direct ou indirect avec les hommes, de maintenir parmi eux le bon ordre, en tâchant de leur procurer tous les avantages dont ils peuvent jouir, & de les garantir de tous les maux dont ils pourroient ressentir les atteintes; & c'est pour cela en particulier qu'on l'a décoré de l'auguste titre fils du Ciel."

"The emperor alone renders honor to the law; his subjects have only to give honor to him as the one who administers the laws."⁶⁷ Indeed, the Zhou thus created a state religion, and the emperor embodies in his own person the head of both government and religion.⁶⁸ Hegel contrasts this with Buddhism and Lamaism, which are forms of religion that can be carried out by private individuals.

In his article, "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," Amiot makes an attempt to illustrate the relation between the emperor and Tian.⁶⁹ In his accompanying graphic Amiot puts the emperor at the very top of the hierarchy. The emperor is aided in his work by the spirits the Shen and the Cheng (on which more below). Then there is a triad or trinity that consists of Tian (heaven), earth, and human beings. The point is that it is the emperor who is thought to be in control of the mundane and extramundane spheres. Amiot makes rather a lot of the triadic aspect and inevitably compares it to the Christian Trinity (see Fig. 3.1).⁷⁰

3.4. THE SYSTEM OF MEASURES

In the new edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* edited by Walter Jaeschke, the heading for the Chinese religion in the 1824 lectures is "The Religion of Ancient China."⁷¹ This is appropriate since this lecture course confines itself to treating just the state religion of the Zhou. By contrast, when Hegel expands his account in the 1827 course, the heading is changed to read, "The State Religion of the Chinese Empire and the Tao."⁷² This reflects the new material about Taoism that Hegel added to his account. This is then changed yet again in the 1831 lecture to read "Chinese Religion: The Religion of Measure."⁷³ In his second edition of Hegel's lectures from 1840, Marheineke chose to adopt this title from Hegel's final lecture course on the subject.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 551n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 449n.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 131; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 182.

⁶⁹ [Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, p. 151. (See Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 121; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 156.)

⁷⁰ [Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, pp. 22ff., p. 26.

⁷¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 299; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 203.

⁷² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 547; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 445.

⁷³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 729; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 618.

⁷⁴ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, I–II, ed. by Philipp Marheineke, vols 11–12 [2nd ed., 1840], in *Hegel's Werke*, vol. 11, p. 326. (*Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, p. 315; *Jub.*, vol. 15, p. 342.)

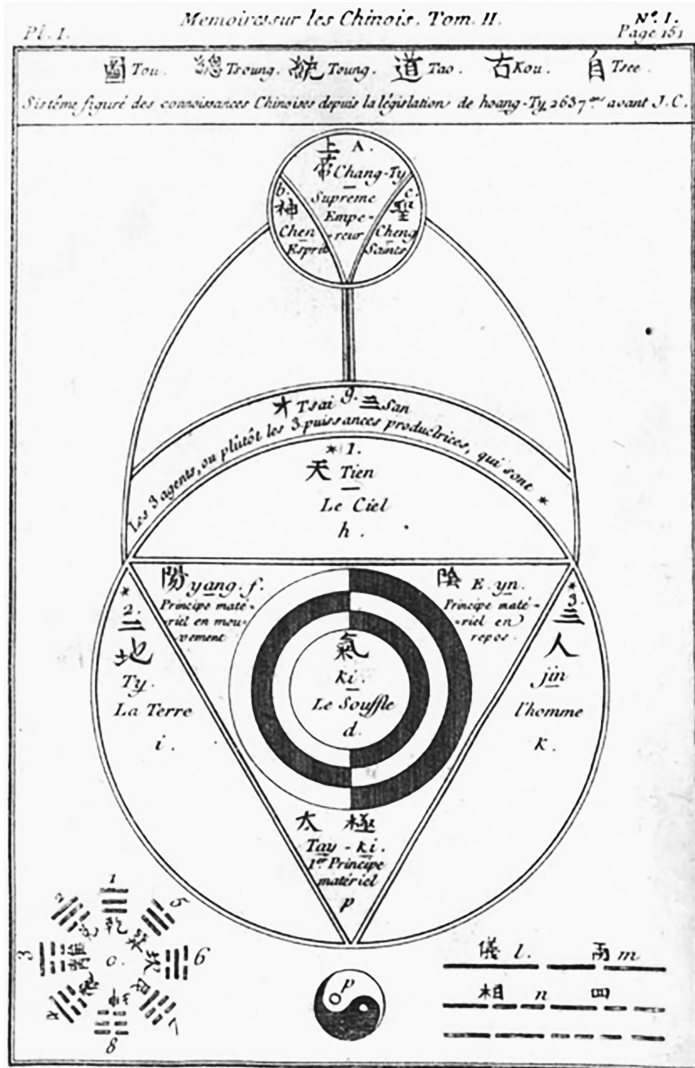


Fig. 3.1. [Jean Joseph Marie Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vols 1–16, Paris: Nyon l'aîné et fils 1776–1814, vol. 2, p. 151.

This is, however, somewhat misleading since it gives the impression that Hegel uses the formulation "the religion of measure" to refer to the Chinese religions generally. But in fact Hegel uses this label to refer specifically to the complex system of lines, the so-called "gua" or "kua," which constitutes a central part of Taoism (and, note well, not all of the different directions of Chinese religion). In addition to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel also refers to

this in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,⁷⁵ the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,⁷⁶ and in his account of language in the *Encyclopedia*.⁷⁷

Hegel gives an analysis of this doctrine, which is found in the *I Ching* or *The Book of Changes*. This ancient book was presumably written by several authors over a long period of time, and the authorship of the work remains a matter of scholarly debate. According to tradition, the first part of the work was written by the legendary figure Fu Xi, who created the gua by making a series of eight 3-line figures or trigrams. This work was then said to be further developed by King Wen (1152–1056 BC), a king of the Zhou Dynasty, who combined the trigrams into 6-line figures called hexagrams. He created a complete system of sixty-four such figures. Again, according to tradition, the third author was the legendary son of King Wen, the Duke of Zhou, who is said to have written the so-called Yao texts, a series of 368 analyses of the figures. The final part of the text was a set of commentaries, the so-called Ten Wings, attributed by tradition to Confucius. The *I Ching* has long been a canonical book for Chinese culture, although it was originally conceived and used as a textbook for divination. Hegel explains the mythical origin of this doctrine as follows:

The old book *I Ching*, or the *Book of Principles*, serves as the foundation... it contains the wisdom of the Chinese, and its origin is attributed to Fohi. That which is related about him passes into what is quite mythological, fabulous and even senseless. The main point in it is the ascription to him of the discovery of a table with certain signs or figures (Ho-tu) which he saw on the back of a horse-dragon as it rose out of the river.⁷⁸

Hegel's source for this is Amiot's "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," where one reads the following account: "Fou-hi vit le Ho-tou sur le corps du Cheval-Dragon, qui sortit de la riviere de Ho, & il en prit occasion de composer ses Koua, lesquels, par leur arrangement primordial, par les différentes combinaisons qu'on en fit d'âge en âge, & par les explications qu'on en a données, forment ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui l'Y-king."⁷⁹

Hegel begins his account of the gua lines didactically by explaining how the complex system of figures begins with two basic ones.⁸⁰ Taoism involves a

⁷⁵ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 121–3; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 156–8.

⁷⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 133; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 185. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 218; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 126f.

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 459, p. 217; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 350.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 121; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 156.

⁷⁹ [Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, p. 54; see also p. 153.

⁸⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 550n; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 447–8n: "As regards measure, there are established categorical determinations which are called reason (Dao). The laws of Dao, or the measures, are categorical determinations or figurations, not of abstract being or of abstract substance, but established, universal determinations. These figurations can in turn be viewed more abstractly, in which case they characterize nature and human spirit, they are laws of human will and human reason."

system of opposite principles, which, one would think, should in principle appeal to Hegel's dialectical philosophy. He explains:

The measures in their abstract universality are quite simple categories: being and not-being, one and two (which is equivalent in general to the many). These universal categories were denoted by the Chinese with straight lines. The basic figure is the line; a simple line (—) signifies the one, an affirmation or “yes”; the broken line (— —) denotes two, cleavage, and negation or “no.”⁸¹

From these initial basic divisions, others are derived, which represent different principles:

There are many different combinations of these signs, which in turn give more concrete meanings of the original categorical determinations. In particular, these more concrete meanings include the four quarters of the world and the center; four mountains corresponding to these regions of the world, and one in the center; and five elements, earth, fire, water, wood, and metal. There are likewise five basic colors, each of which belongs to one element.⁸²

Hegel gives a more detailed account of this in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where he explains:

First of all they are placed in combination of two from which four figures result: == == == == or the great Yang, the little Yang, the little Yin, and the great Yin. The signification of these four representations is matter as perfect and imperfect. The two Yangs are perfect matter: the first is in the category of youth and power; the second is the same matter, but as old and powerless. The third and fourth images, where Yin constitutes the basis, are imperfect matter, which has again the two determinations of youth and age, strength and weakness.⁸³

The dual lines are then developed into a system based on combinations of three lines.

These lines are further united in sets of three, and thus eight figures result, which are called Gua, ☰, ☷, ☱, ☴, ☲, ☵, ☶. I will give the interpretation of these Gua just to show how superficial it is. The first sign, containing the great Yang and the Yang is the Heavens (Tien) or the all-pervading ether. . . . The second sign is pure water (Tui), the third pure fire (Li), the fourth thunder (Tschin), the fifth wind (Siun), the sixth common water (Kan), the seventh mountains (Ken), the eight the earth (Kuen).⁸⁴

⁸¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 551n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 448n. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 133; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 185. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 122; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 157.

⁸² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 551n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 448n. See Windischmann, *Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte*, Erster Theil, *Die Grundlagen der Philosophie im Morgenland*, pp. 126f.

⁸³ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 122; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 157.

⁸⁴ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 122f.; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 157f.

With this Hegel sketches the general overview of the scheme and meaning of the main figures.

As noted above, one of Hegel's sources of this is *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, a major work from 1687 by a group of Jesuit monks. This book contains an account of the *I Ching*. At the beginning one finds a detailed exposition and an overview of the sixty-four hexagrams (see Fig. 3.2).⁸⁵

Hegel refers to this as follows in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: "United further in sets of four, the lines produce sixty-four figures, which the Chinese consider to be the origin of their characters since there have been added to these straight lines those which are perpendicular and inclined in different directions."⁸⁶ From this it is clear to see that the individual elements of which the universe consists are thought to exist in a perfect harmony with one another. The lines show the perfect balance and symmetry of the whole.

Windischmann's *Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte* was also presumably an important source of information for Hegel about the system of the gua lines and the hexagrams.⁸⁷ This work presents a detailed account of the system of hexagrams that contains most all of the information that Hegel presents. Hegel references this book, however, primarily to demonstrate his own negative assessment that the system of the gua lines does not represent anything resembling speculative philosophy.⁸⁸ He mentions this as a critical point against Windischmann's more positive view.

Yet another account of this is given in Amiot's article "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens." Like Hegel, Amiot begins by explaining the basis of the system with the full line and the broken line.⁸⁹ He illustrates this in his first graphic (*Planche*), shown in Fig. 3.1 in the bottom right hand corner under the letters L and M. These are then placed parallel to one another to produce the different combinations (illustrated under the letter N). Amiot then explains in detail the development of the system of lines, which led to the eight fundamental hexagrams:

⁸⁵ Prospero Intorcetta, Christian Herdrich, François Rougemont, Philippe Couplet, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive scientia sinensis latine exposita*, Paris: Daniel Horthemels 1687, p. xlv. For an account of this influential work, see Mungello, *Curious Land*, pp. 247–99.

⁸⁶ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 123; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 157.

⁸⁷ Windischmann, *Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte*, Erster Theil, *Die Grundlagentheorie der Philosophie im Morgenland*, pp. 145ff. (See *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 123; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 158.)

⁸⁸ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, [p. 123] this passage has been omitted from this translation; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 158: "nicht ein Funcke von Begriff ist darin."

⁸⁹ [Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, p. 17. (See Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 121; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 156.)

**Tabula sexaginta quatuor Figurarum ,
feu Liber mutationum *Ye kim* dictus.**

1. Caelum.	2. Terra.	3. Aqua.	4. Montem.	5. Aqua.	6. Caelum.	7. Terra.	8. Aqua.
Caelum.	Terra.	Tonitru.	Aqua.	Caelum.	Aqua.	Aqua.	Terra.
9. Vent.	10. Caelum.	11. Terra.	12. Caelum.	13. Caelum.	14. Ignis.	15. Terra.	16. Tonitru.
Caelum.	Aqua m.	Caelum.	Terra.	Ignis.	Caelum.	Montem.	Terra.
17. Aqua m.	18. Montem.	19. Terra.	20. Vent.	21. Ignis.	22. Montem.	23. Montem.	24. Terra.
Tonitru.	Vent.	Aqua m.	Terra.	Tonitru.	Ignis.	Terra.	Tonitru.
25. Caelum.	26. Montem.	27. Montem.	28. Aqua m.	29. Aqua.	30. Ignis.	31. Aqua m.	32. Tonitru.
Tonitru.	Caelum.	Tonitru.	Vent.	Aqua.	Ignis.	Montem.	Vent.
33. Caelum.	34. Tonitru.	35. Ignis.	36. Terra.	37. Terra.	38. Ignis.	39. Aqua.	40. Tonitru.
Montem.	Caelum.	Terra.	Ignis.	Ignis.	Aqua m.	Montem.	Aqua.
41. Montem.	42. Vent.	43. Aqua m.	44. Caelum.	45. Aqua m.	46. Terra.	47. Aqua m.	48. Aqua.
Aqua m.	Tonitru.	Caelum.	Vent.	Terra.	Vent.	Aqua.	Vent.
49. Aqua m.	50. Ignis.	51. Tonitru.	52. Montem.	53. Vent.	54. Tonitru.	55. Tonitru.	56. Ignis.
Ignis.	Vent.	Tonitru.	Montem.	Montem.	Aqua m.	Ignis.	Montem.
57. Vent.	58. Aqua m.	59. Vent.	60. Aqua.	61. Vent.	62. Tonitru.	63. Aqua.	64. Terra.
Vent.	Aqua m.	Aqua.	Aqua m.	Aqua m.	Montem.	Ignis.	Aqua.

Hus

Fig. 3.2. Prospero Intorcetta, Christian Herdtrich, François Rougemont, Philippe Coup-let, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive scientia sinensis latine exposita*, Paris: Daniel Horthemels 1687, p. xlv.

Ces huit Koua, ou trigrammes, étoient rangés & combinés entre eux tels qu'ils sont représentés dans la figure O de la première Planche, c'est-à-dire qu'ils regardent les points cardinaux du monde, & que le parfait est opposé à l'imparfait, les nombres pairs aux nombres impairs, le ciel à la terre, les montagnes aux eaux de ces mêmes montagnes, le feu à l'eau, & le tonnerre aux vents. De plus, les quatre trigrammes formés de nombres pairs ont entre eux tous la même quantité de traits que les quatre qui sont formés par les nombres impairs. Tel fut le premier arrangement

*des Koua; tel est, disent les Philosophes de la Chine, l'ordre immuable de la Nature pour la production de toutes choses.*⁹⁰

In order to illustrate this more clearly for his readers, Amiot also portrays this in his graphic (see again Fig. 3.1), where at the bottom left one can see “figure O” that he alludes to. This system is then further developed to create the sixty-four hexagrams, which is illustrated by Amiot in Fig. 3.3.

Seen from a historical perspective, the Chinese focus on harmony and balance makes perfect sense. Ancient China was plagued by constant warfare and power struggles of different kingdoms, tribes, and clans, struggling for many centuries to establish a form of central authority. It does not take much of a leap of imagination to conceive of such a state as one of chaos. Once this situation was finally overcome with the installation of the first emperor and the unification of the warring factions, it was clear that a high premium would be placed on peace and stability, and anything that threatened this would be regarded as deeply disturbing and subversive. The religious conception of a harmonious universe consisting of a precarious balance is a natural result of a world that is emerging out of years of internecine warfare and conflict.

This historical background explains why this not only is thought of as an abstract metaphysical structure but rather is also closely tied to the conception of morality and human relations. Just as the universe itself consists of determinations of measure which give the world a rational structure, so also does human life and society. Human beings are a part of this world, and so their activity and behavior are also conceived as being regulated by this structure. Hegel explains:

if human beings perform their duties, then everything is in order in nature as well as in the empire; both the empire and the [dutiful] individuals prosper. There is a moral coherence here between human action and what happens in nature. If misfortune overtakes the empire, whether owing to floods or to earthquakes, conflagrations, drought, or the like, this arises entirely from the human failure to follow the laws of reason, from the fact that the determinations of measure have not been properly maintained in the kingdom. Because of this omission the universal measure is destroyed, and this kind of misfortune strikes.⁹¹

There is thus a conception of a cosmic balance which is intertwined in the natural and the human world. When the balance in the natural world is

⁹⁰ [Amiot], “L’Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens,” in *Mémoires concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, pp. 17f. See also the account of Amiot gives on pp. 151–5.

⁹¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 551n; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 448–9n.

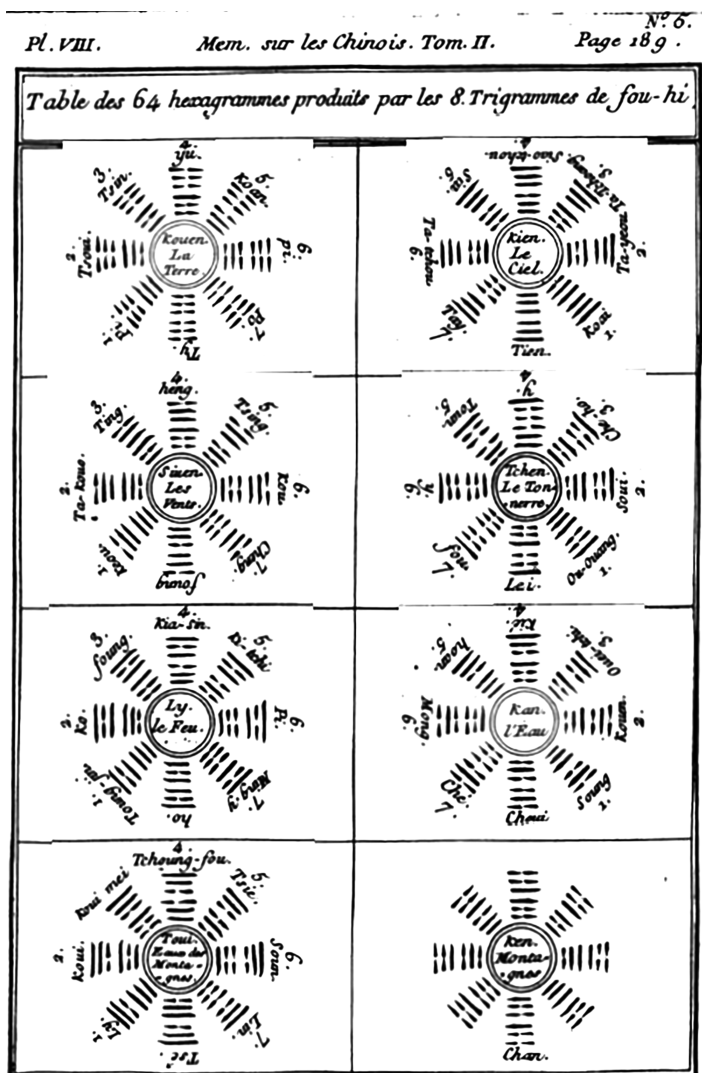


Fig. 3.3. [Jean Joseph Marie Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinois, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vols 1-16, Paris: Nyon l'aîné et fils 1776-1814, vol. 2, p. 189.

disturbed, it is a reflection of an imbalance in the human world. Here one can see the relation to magic, some elements of which Hegel believes still remain in the religion of Zhou.

Maintaining the cosmic balance is the primary task of the emperor and his army of officials. The good comportment of the emperor is imperative for

securing the prosperity of the people.⁹² Moral lapses or lack of conscientious fulfillment of duty are thought to result in disasters for the entire people: "When floods, plague, and the like lay waste and scourge the country, the emperor alone must deal with the situation; he acknowledges his officials, and especially himself, to be the cause of the misfortune—if he and his magistrates had maintained the law properly, the misfortune would not have occurred."⁹³ The emperor and his subjects must thus be conscientious in their pursuit of the moral life in order to maintain harmony and order in their society and the universe at large: "Thus the prosperity of the empire and the individual depends on the fulfillment of duty."⁹⁴ Hegel's source here may well be Grosier again, who gives an account of the ways in which the emperor attempts to appease the angry Tian in times of crisis.⁹⁵

The only way to rectify a threatening situation is for the emperor and his officials to determine the wrongdoing responsible for the disasters and atone for it: "The emperor therefore commands the officials to examine themselves and to see how they have failed in their duty; and he in like manner devotes himself to meditation and penitence because he has not acted rightly."⁹⁶ Here again one sees that the emperor is closely connected with nature and the forces of the universe, which are conceived as hanging in a delicate balance which must be maintained.

3.5. THE SPIRITS (QI, SHEN)

In his administration, the emperor has as civil servants not only the living, the mandarins, but also the dead. The emperor makes use of the dead spirits, who are appointed to be in charge of specific natural forces and events. One is in charge of regulating the rain, another fire, etc. Hegel explains:

A second side of this religion is, that as the general aspect of the relation to Heaven is bound up with the person of the emperor, he has also its more special bearings in his hands; viz. the particular well-being of individuals and provinces. These have each an appropriate *Genius* (Shen), which is subject to the emperor, who pays adoration only to the general power of Heaven, while the several spirits of the natural world follow his laws. He is thus made the proper legislator for Heaven as well as for earth.⁹⁷

⁹² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 132; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 183f. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 245; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 159.

⁹³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 551–2n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 449n.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 552n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 449n.

⁹⁵ Grosier, *Description générale de la Chine*, vol. 1, pp. 544–5.

⁹⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 552n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 449n.

⁹⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 132; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 184. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 247; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 161.

The dead work together with the living in order to maintain balance and order. The idea of employing the services of the dead is closely connected with the practice of ancestor worship.⁹⁸ When distinguished family members die, they are still thought to have an influence over mundane affairs and to continue to execute their commissions after death.⁹⁹ The spirits help with the regulation of specific laws and practices at a level of detail that extends beyond the ability of the emperor. The dead spirits are in charge of regulating the natural forces, for example, the five elements (earth, fire, water, wood, and metal), the rain, epidemics, etc.¹⁰⁰

But in addition to dead ancestors, the spirits are also conceived in terms of frightening monsters: "To these Genii, each of which enjoys a worship particular to itself, certain sculptured forms are assigned. These are disgusting idols, which have not yet attained the dignity of art, because nothing spiritual is represented in them. They are therefore only terrifying, frightful and negative."¹⁰¹ The numerous spirits and minor deities thus reflect the human administration of the Empire. Like their human counterparts, the spirits can be promoted for good work or punished or demoted for negligence. With the accession of a new emperor new spirits must be appointed to take care of the different realms of activity. This means that the old ones had not done their job adequately and therefore in effect have to be put aside: "In the event of misfortune in some locality—crop failure, conflagrations, flooding, or the like—the relevant Shen are summoned and dismissed, the images wherein they had been venerated are torn down, and new Shen are designated. Thus in China the emperor's lordship over nature is a fully organized monarchy."¹⁰² This takes place symbolically with the desecration of the graves of the ancestors of the previous dynasty. In this way, the ancestors and spirits of the old dynasty are displaced from their offices. This is the same phenomenon that was seen previously in the discussion of fetishism, when the individual fetish was used only as long as it achieved the desired result, but was cast away and replaced as soon as it failed.

Hegel recounts the story of how the Zhou defeated and succeeded the Shang Dynasty—an account that he read in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les*

⁹⁸ Amiot is keen to distinguish ancestor worship from the worship of the divine. See [Amiot], "L'Antiquité des Chinoise, prouvée par les monumens," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 2, p. 34.

⁹⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 552n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 450n.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 303; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 207. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 555; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 452f. [Jean Joseph Marie Amiot], "Extrait d'une lettre de M. Amiot, Missionnaire, écrite de Péking, le 16 Octobre 1787. Sur La Secte des Tao-sée," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 15, p. 241.

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 132f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 184. Translation slightly modified.

¹⁰² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 303; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 207.

*sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois.*¹⁰³ One of the first orders of the day for the new emperor was to remove the old Qi from office since it was due to their negligence that the problems arose that brought down the old dynasty. The emperor presented himself before the Qi and had his general read from a text indicating his wishes for what was to happen to the old Qi: "The Shen, especially the more recently dead, were rebuked for the poor administration of the realm, as a result of which the empire fell into ruin."¹⁰⁴ Due to their negligence, they were then dismissed from their positions. The duties connected with governing the empire were delegated once again but surprisingly they were given back to the old Shen who had just been deposed in order to avoid alienating their living relatives.

One might think that since the Chinese have a cult of worshipping their dead ancestors that this would count for a theory of immortality. But for Hegel this is not the case: "With the Chinese we see great respect shown to the deceased, the son ascribing all that he does to his forefathers. It exalts them, not him. So we see in this instance the view that the deceased are a perennial factor, although that does not suffice for the belief in the immortality of the soul—quite the contrary."¹⁰⁵ According to Hegel, the ancient Chinese have not arrived at a developed sense of the individual yet. This undermines a meaningful conception of immortality. He explains:

People suppose that, when the emperor elevates to a higher level the father of the person being honored, this is a proof of belief in immortality. But immortality of the soul means that the soul, this inwardness, is infinite of itself. This inward, individual private sphere, to which no temporal honor can any longer befall or be shown, is supposed to be immortality, something that is over and done with temporality. The emperor cannot honor it by exalting it, and so this is the indication that for the Chinese there is no such thing as this absolutely free, inner being-for-self of soul. Hence exaltation in time no longer has any meaning; for the soul resides where worldly honor can no longer reach it; and if worldly

¹⁰³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 552–5; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 449–52. [Amiot], "Extrait d'une lettre de M. Amiot, Missionnaire, écrite de Péking, le 16 Octobre 1787. Sur La Secte des Tao-sée," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 15, pp. 228–41.

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 554; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 451f. See [Amiot], "Extrait d'une lettre de M. Amiot, Missionnaire," in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, vol. 15, pp. 235f., where the Shen are addressed as follows: "vous fûtes jugés dignes d'être mis après votre mort au rang des Chen, vous n'avez rien fait qui mérite de nouvelles récompenses; vous mériteriez au contraire des châtimens, pour avoir négligé de remplir les emplois qu'on vous avoit confiés, avec les soins & l'exactitude qu'ils exigent, & qu'on avoit lieu d'attendre de vous. Cette négligence de votre part est en partie cause des maux qui ont affligé les hommes sous le dernier Empereur de la race de Tcheng-tang... Vous ne sauriez remplir sous cette nouvelle race, les emplois qui vous étoient confiés sous celle qui vient de finir. Le Ciel vous en décharge, pour les donner à d'autres plus dignes que vous de les occuper. Allez, retirez-vous où bon vous semblera..."

¹⁰⁵ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 361; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 301.

honor does extend to it, then this is a sign that what we have here is not what is called an immortal soul.¹⁰⁶

By granting the deceased mundane honors, the Chinese imply that the dead souls are still in some way active participants in temporal, mundane society. But this is inconsistent with the view that there is something absolute and infinite about the individual that transcends this sphere. If one were truly immortal, such honors would not be important. The Chinese conception implies that the dead souls are still deeply interested in the affairs of mundane life. They have not been released from the finite earthly cares and thus are not truly immortal.

3.6. THE LACK OF SUBJECTIVE FREEDOM, AND SUPERSTITION

According to Hegel, this is a very rudimentary form of religion since it reflects an undeveloped conception of what human beings are. The ancient Chinese never advanced to the level of subjective freedom, and this shortcoming is found in their religion. They have no conception of God as a self-conscious spirit, but rather the divine remains a general notion of the totality of the natural world. In Christianity, God is a Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a deity with self-consciousness and with a concrete determination in the Son. By virtue of this the individual believer can identify with the divine and recognize a divine element in himself. This conception of the divine is a natural reflection of the self-conception of the individual in modern Western society. By contrast, for the ancient Chinese the relation is as follows:

Since the universal, the higher, is only the abstract foundation, the human being thus abides in it without any properly immanent, fulfilled inner element; one has no inner hold on oneself. One has for the first time a footing within oneself when freedom and rationality emerge, when one has the consciousness of being free and when this freedom elaborates itself as reason.¹⁰⁷

The individuals find themselves vis-à-vis not another self-conscious entity but rather a thing. Since the dialectic of recognition requires the interaction of two self-conscious entities, it cannot get started here. The universal substance of Tian does not reflect subjectivity or recognition back to the individual. Since

¹⁰⁶ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 361; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 301f.

¹⁰⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 560; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 457.

the Chinese have no subjective freedom, according to Hegel, they lack an inner life by which they can reflect and choose for themselves.

Therefore, they are wholly dependent on the outside world and what comes to them from it. Their goal in life is simply to learn what duties the external universe enjoins them to do and then to do them. They have no opportunity to determine their own will and duties for themselves. They live in complete dependency on the external world of nature which is conceived as the divine.¹⁰⁸ The goals, dreams, interests, and wishes of the individual are entirely irrelevant; people determine their lives based not on such things but rather on the dictates of the external force of Tian. They dedicate their lives to following what it demands in order to maintain the order, balance, and harmony of the universe. In this picture the subjectivity of the individual plays no role and remains wholly undeveloped. Since the goal of life is to bring oneself into line with the universal harmony or balance of nature, there is no recognition of anything important, unique, or special about the individual. People must simply conform to the demands of the external natural world.

Hegel also explains the lack of subjective freedom among the Chinese in terms of the way in which morality and law are merged together in the Chinese state. He claims that one of the defining features of Chinese society is that "what is ethical is made to be the law. What has value only as a sentiment is supposed to have the force of law, as its object. What by nature is moral, namely what belongs to inward self-determination, is thus commanded by law."¹⁰⁹ The Chinese legislate everything having to do with the sphere of ethics and custom. What is ethically right must always be legally sanctioned. According to Hegel, this collapse of the two spheres makes ethics into something external since the law is something outward, publicly known, and universally accessible. This results in the elimination of the sphere of inwardness, where ethics has its natural domicile. The conscience and inward disposition of the individual has no place here since everything that a person is to do is dictated by the laws. Ideas such as personal consent and individual responsibility are non-existent in this context. This precludes subjective freedom, which must dwell in the subject and at times be opposed to the state or the external sphere.¹¹⁰ According to Hegel, this prevents any sense of individual initiative, creativity, and inwardness from arising, and this is the reason that the Chinese never developed science, art, or other cultural elements in the same way as in the West. Such things depend on subjective freedom for their development.¹¹¹ Subjectivity and inwardness must be respected for freedom to exist.

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 560f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 457.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 233; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 144.

¹¹⁰ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 234; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 145f.

¹¹¹ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 234; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 145.

For Hegel, this lack of subjective freedom can be seen in a number of Chinese institutions. Most obviously, the existence of slavery in China demonstrates a negative conception of an individual that is incompatible with subjective freedom.¹¹² Another telling aspect of Chinese society can be found in the conception of guilt and punishment. When a criminal commits a crime, he is punished not just on his own but together with his entire family. For more heinous acts, even small children are put to death due to the crime of their fathers. Once again this reveals a conception of the human being that does not respect the right of the individual. Instead, innocent individuals are implicated in the guilt of another simply by virtue of the fact that they are in the same family.¹¹³ Since the Chinese government and legal system do not allow individuality and subjective freedom to arise, they in effect treat their citizens as children or minors, incapable of reasoning or deciding for themselves.¹¹⁴

One result of this dependence on the external is superstition. The emperor can declare certain general laws and duties, but these are limited in their generality and do not always fit immediately in every context. Thus the individuals must be highly attentive to the demands of the divine in all of the other cases that are not covered explicitly and clearly by the emperor's commands and laws. This leaves them then to attempt to understand and interpret the demands of the universe on their own. But since there are innumerable instances in which this is needed in the course of daily life, this leads to an acute fixation on the external sphere of nature and its meaning. In all of this it never occurs to individuals to make even the smallest, most trivial decisions for themselves since they have no recognition of the value or dignity of their own individual will. They are entirely subject to nature and must obey its dictates in everything. Hegel explains, "everything is external, everything that is connected with them [sc. the Chinese] is a power for them, because in their rationality and morality they have no power within themselves. The consequence is an indeterminable dependence on everything external, the highest and most contingent kind of superstition."¹¹⁵

This leads to great anxiety since people are dependent upon the arbitrary action of the spirits.¹¹⁶ The ancient Chinese fear that through some mistaken action of their own the harmony or balance of the universe will be disturbed. This sense of fear is made more acute by the fact that this can happen due not just to large and significant acts but also to small and trivial ones. Thus great attention must be given to the tiniest action of daily life since it might hold the

¹¹² Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 235; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 146f. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 225; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 134. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 229f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 139.

¹¹³ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 235; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 147.

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 237; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 149.

¹¹⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 561; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 457f.

¹¹⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 561; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 458.

key to the well-being of the universe and society. The result of this is superstition about the acts in daily life. Hegel goes on to list numerous examples of various forms of superstition:

Divination in particular makes its home there; anxiety in the face of every contingent situation impels them to it. In every locale there are many who occupy themselves with prophesy; the correct place for one's dwelling, for one's grave (both the locality and the spatial arrangement)—the Chinese engage in such things throughout their entire lives. In the building of a house, if another house flanks one's own, or if the front has an angle facing it, then all possible ceremonies are performed with respect to it, and so on.¹¹⁷

This superstition is closely connected to the numerous spirits. The monks or priests, called "Bonzes," Hegel says, "are soothsayers and exorcists," who communicate with the spirit world.¹¹⁸

Since the conception of human beings has not reached a sufficiently advanced level, the Chinese religion does not even attain the true status of a religion:

But in China religion has not risen to this level, for true faith is possible only where individuals can seclude themselves—can exist for themselves independently of any external compulsory power. In China the individual has no such life; —does not enjoy this independence: in any direction he is therefore dependent; in religion as well as in other things; that is, dependent on objects of nature, of which the most exalted is the material heaven.¹¹⁹

For Hegel, religion is about the inward life of individuals, but this is wholly undeveloped among the Chinese. Since there is no inward life or subjectivity of the individual, the conception of the divine among the Chinese is also abstract and empty.

According to Hegel, the conception of the human being is very rudimentary in Chinese society. Only the emperor has value and dignity; only he has the right to make sacrifices and to partake in religious ceremonies addressed to Tian. He is regarded as a kind of national father figure. By contrast, everyone else in society counts for next to nothing. They are not allowed to address the divine. They are kept in a childlike state of obedience. The Chinese, according to Hegel, thus never grow up to realize their true abilities as adults. Since they are absolutely dependent on the emperor, who holds the decision of life and death, they feel an acute sense of impotence to effect anything on their own. While the emperor is thought to be in charge of keeping the world in balance and harmony, private individuals have only limited agency even in the small

¹¹⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 561f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 458. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 133; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 185. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 249; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 163.

¹¹⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 133; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 184f.

¹¹⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 131f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 183. Translation slightly modified.

sphere of their personal lives. But their feeling of impotence is enhanced by the fact that they cannot understand all of the complex relations of cause and effect that together make up the universe. While the emperor, as an adult, can make a plan and change certain things in his administration to bring an out-of-balance world back into harmony, the common individual, as a child, is unable to reflect rationally on the situation and develop his or her own plan of action. The individuals are overwhelmed by the dangers that threaten from all sides if one does not act correctly. This is where superstition comes in. In important matters, the Chinese, according to Hegel, are fixated on small details which might have negative long-term effects if they do not perform the right rituals at the right times. Since they cannot fully understand all the relations of cause and effect, everything is potentially a threat. The Chinese must thus be ever vigilant to ward off evil in any sphere of life. For Hegel, this is the result of a very rudimentary conception of the human subject.

Buddhism and Lamaism

The Religion of Being-within-Self

Hegel next treats together Buddhism and its special variant Tibetan Buddhism, which he refers to as “Lamaism” due to the fact that the Tibetans worship lamas as incarnate divinities. In addition to his treatment in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,¹ he also has a similar discussion in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.² Surprisingly, Hegel gives no account of Buddhism in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, although he does have a section on “Oriental Philosophy” that includes a discussion of Confucianism and Taoism.³ He also mentions Buddhism briefly in the *Science of Logic* in connection with his treatment of the category of nothingness.⁴ This is in many ways characteristic of his view of Buddhism, which he generally regards as a cult of nothingness—a view that was widespread among European scholars of the day.⁵

A study of this religion in Hegel is complicated by the fact that its placement in the series of world religions is not unambiguous. Apparently, towards the end of his life Hegel changed his mind about the role of Buddhism in the development of religious consciousness.⁶ In the lectures from 1824 and 1827,

¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 303–16; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 207–18. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 562–79; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 458–75. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 735–6; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 623. *NR*, pp. 119–37. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 48–65; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 400–17.

² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 167–72; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 227–33. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 295–303; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 223–33. *OW*, pp. 411–13.

³ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 119–25; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 154–60.

⁴ See Hegel, *SL*, p. 83; *Jub.*, vol. 4, p. 90: “As we know, in the oriental systems, principally in Buddhism, nothing, the void, is the absolute principle.” See also *EL*, § 87; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 207.

⁵ See Roger-Pol Droit in his *The Cult of Nothingness: The Philosophers and the Buddha*, trans. by David Streight and Pamela Vohnson, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press 2003. Urs App, *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy*, Rorschach and Kyoto: University Media 2012.

⁶ See the discussion in Paul Cruysberghs, “Hinduism: A Religion of Fantasy,” in *Hegel’s Philosophy of the Historical Religions*, ed. by Bart Labuschagne and Timo Slootweg, Leiden and Boston: Brill 2012, pp. 31–50.

he treated *first* Buddhism and *then* Hinduism (the form of presentation followed here).⁷ This is the way the material is presented in the Lassel edition of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.⁸ Then in his final lecture course in 1831, Hegel reversed the order, treating Hinduism first and Buddhism and Lamaism second.⁹ (This is mirrored in Marheineke's edition of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In the first edition from 1832, Marheineke places Buddhism first and then Hinduism. But then in the second edition from 1840 this order is reversed.)

Hegel begins by explaining the historical and geographical horizon of this religion. He often refers to Buddhism as "the religion of Fo," with Fo being Chinese for "Buddha." In the literature of the day, there was no standardized way of referring to Buddha, and so there were different terms used, depending on the context and the source materials. In addition to the Chinese version "Fo," the Japanese variant "Shaka" also enjoyed currency at the time. Hegel further uses the name "Guatama."¹⁰ In any case, with regard to the geographical dissemination of Buddhism, he explains:

To turn to the overt historical aspect, we have now defined the religion of Fo in China; this is the religion of the Chinese, Mongols, and Tibetans, also of the Burmese and Ceylonese, except that what is in China called Fo they call Buddha. However, the two terms mean the same, and this is the religion we know under the form of Lamaism.¹¹

Hegel explains the placement of this religion after the Chinese religion in the first instance in terms of chronology:

The Fo religion as such comes from China, and in historical fact it is somewhat later than the form in which power is the dominant element. The French missionaries cite a decree of Emperor Xian-zong dissolving a large number of monasteries and forcing their inmates to return to the world, because these monasteries, these priests, did not cultivate the soil and paid no taxes. The emperor's decree begins as follows: "Under our three famous dynasties the Fo sect was never heard of, it has emerged only since the Han dynasty."¹²

Although Hegel does acknowledge that Buddha was a historical person, who lived in India,¹³ he does not recount any information about the life of Buddha, although depictions of this do appear in his sources.

⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 303–16; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 207–18. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 562–79; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 458–75. See also *Phil. of Mind*, § 393, Addition, pp. 43f.; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 74f.

⁸ Hegel, *NR*, pp. 119–37. ⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 735–6; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 623.

¹⁰ See, for example, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 563; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 460.

¹¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 307; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 211. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 168; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 228.

¹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 311; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 214.

¹³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 563; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 460.

There is another problem, which makes Hegel's treatment of this religion somewhat unique. He tends to think in terms of individual peoples: the Egyptians, the Persians, the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, etc. Thus his philosophy of history is organized by means of the great empires of individual peoples, which rise and fall. He apparently tries to apply this same principle to the sphere of religion, thus ascribing one specific religion to one specific people. Each religion is therefore a reflection of the spirit of an individual nation. But Buddhism breaks with this pattern due to the fact that it has such a broad geographical sway and is not a national religion.

It should also be noted that Hegel's analysis of Buddhism is fairly short and seems to be connected with his account of Hinduism. Indeed, he begins his account in the 1831 lectures by saying that it is "very much akin to Hinduism."¹⁴ This connection is in line with some of his sources, which do not always clearly distinguish between the two.¹⁵ Although in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Buddhism is treated on equal footing with the Chinese religion and Hinduism, by contrast, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, it only appears as a short section under the larger rubric of "India."¹⁶ The disanalogy is presumably due to the fact China and India play an important role as nations or peoples in the latter lectures, whereas Buddhism is, as just noted, transnational.

This aspect of Buddhism also causes problems for Hegel's geographical presentation.¹⁷ Hegel wants to trace the movement of history and of the world religions from east to west. The sequence of China, India, Persia, and Egypt fits this tidy scheme quite well. But the geographical spread of Buddhism in China, Mongolia, Tibet, Burma, etc. causes problems for this view since Buddhism cannot be cleanly placed either between China and India or between India and Persia. This is presumably one of the reasons why Hegel struggled with the correct placement of this religion.

Finally, scholars in Hegel's day were generally unaware of the complexity and richness of Buddhism, which contains a number of different schools. What Hegel actually treats is for the most part Tibetan Buddhism, and for this

¹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 735; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 623.

¹⁵ See Mark Lussier, *Romantic Dharma: The Emergence of Buddhism into Nineteenth-Century Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2011, p. 2: "Before this intensive phase of encounter, Buddhism, for even the most educated, well-read, and well-traveled Europeans, remained a somewhat dissonant presence within the sacred literature of Hinduism . . . and presented severe difficulties to separate its analytic structures, meditative practices, and ethical presumptions from its site of origin in India."

¹⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 167–72; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 227–33. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 295–303; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 223–33. *OW*, pp. 411–13.

¹⁷ See Urs App, "The Tibet of the Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer," in *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vols 1–2, ed. by Monica Esposito, Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient 2008, p. 39.

reason he focuses on “Lamaism.” Although he takes Lamaism to be synonymous with Buddhism, this is of course only one school of Buddhism.¹⁸

4.1. HEGEL’S SOURCES

European interest in Buddhism came as a natural result and offshoot of the contemporary interest in the culture and religion of China and India. During Hegel’s time the scholarly study of Buddhism was still in its infancy, and thus, although he follows closely the sources at his disposal, the picture that he has of Buddhism is rather different from the one we have today, and some of his factual information about the history and practice of this religion is incomplete or inaccurate. The original sources of the Buddhist texts were written primarily in Sanskrit, Pali, and Tibetan—languages that were only beginning to be learned by Europeans. Lacking access to original source materials, Hegel focuses exclusively on doctrines and practices of the Buddhists without any real mention of their written works. He was thus seriously handicapped with regard to gaining an informed and accurate picture of Buddhism. Given that the scholarly field of Buddhist studies or Buddology emerged from that of Indology towards the end of Hegel’s life and only came into full bloom after his death,¹⁹ Hegel was clearly less well informed about Buddhism than he was about Hinduism. With this said, however, there was a curiosity about Buddhism among scholars of the day and not least of all philosophers.²⁰

Volume 6, published in 1750, of the *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande; oder Sammlung aller Reisebeschreibungen* contains a fairly lengthy discussion of Buddhism in connection with its account of the

¹⁸ See Henk Oosterling, “Avoiding Nihilism by Affirming Nothing: Hegel on Buddhism,” in *Hegel’s Philosophy of the Historical Religions*, ed. by Labuschagne and Slootweg, p. 58.

¹⁹ For Hegel’s sources see the “Editorial Introduction” in *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 6, pp. 15–17, pp. 36–8, pp. 60–1, pp. 77–8.

²⁰ See Roger-Pol Droit, *The Cult of Nothingness: The Philosophers and the Buddha*. Urs App, *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy*. Lussier, *Romantic Dharma: The Emergence of Buddhism into Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press 1988. Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture: 543 BCE–1992*, London: Harper Collins 1994. Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and “The Mystic East,”* Florence, KY: Routledge 1999. Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, New York: Columbia University Press 1984. Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2010, pp. 188–253. J.W. de Jong, *A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America*, Tokyo; Delhi: Sri Satguru Publication 1987, pp. 5–23.

religion of China.²¹ This analysis begins with a description of the life of the Buddha and the legends surrounding it, which are portrayed as superstitious nonsense. After learning from the yogis, Buddha is said to have had a transformation and, from that moment on, to have regarded himself as a god.²² This religion then spread quickly to many parts of Asia. The story recounts that, with death approaching, the Buddha revealed to his disciples that he had hidden the true nature of things from them, speaking only in images and metaphors; now the time had come for him to make his real doctrine clear to them. This doctrine was that there was ultimately no other truth than nothingness: “*das Leere und das Nichts*.”²³ This anecdote, which was constantly repeated in later accounts, then became an important source of the notion that Buddhism is a cult of nihilism or nothingness. Buddha is further said to have convinced his followers that he had been reborn 8,000 times in several forms including that of a monkey, a dragon, and a white elephant.²⁴ This work is also the origin of a story that Hegel uses to illustrate the doctrine of metempsychosis.²⁵ It is recounted that in Buddhism the height of holiness amounts to extinguishing one's desires and ceasing to think and act.²⁶ This is a central point in Hegel's analysis. The account of Buddhism given in this work is generally quite harsh. It is referred to as a “godless doctrine,”²⁷ characterized by absurd superstition suited only for weak-minded and gullible people.

Joseph de Guignes (1721–1800) was a French orientalist, who worked as translator of Eastern languages at the Royal Library in Paris. He published a major work from 1756–8 under the title, *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux*.²⁸ Although this is generally a work of political history, it does contain a treatment of Buddhism, which repeats some aspects of the more detailed account from the *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*.²⁹ De Guignes explains the doctrine of metempsychosis and the belief that the Buddha appeared in several incarnations both as a human being and as animals. He further recounts the story that at the end of his life the Buddha revealed to his disciples that his true

²¹ *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande; oder Sammlung aller Reisebeschreibungen*, vols 1–21, Leipzig: Heinrich Merkus 1747–74, vol. 6, pp. 358–82. See LPR, vol. 2, p. 307, note 190; VPR, Part 2b, p. 710, Anmerkung 211,47–9.

²² *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*, vol. 6, p. 359.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

²⁴ *Ibid.* See also p. 371, where the doctrine of metempsychosis is discussed.

²⁵ Hegel, LPR, vol. 2, pp. 313f.; VPR, Part 2, pp. 216f. *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*, vol. 6, p. 362.

²⁶ *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*, vol. 6, pp. 368f.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

²⁸ Joseph de Guignes, *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux*, vols 1–4, Paris: Desaint & Saillant 1756–8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 223–39.

doctrine was that there was ultimately no other truth than nothingness: “le vuide [sic.] & le néant,”³⁰ an echo of the “das Leere und das Nichts” from the account in the *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*. Referring to it simply as an unnamed “ouvrage de Fo,”³¹ de Guignes gives a translation of the *Sutra of the Forty-Two Chapters*,³² the first such translation in a Western language. He also goes into some detail about the Lamas and specifically the Dalai Lama³³ and the introduction of Buddhism into China.³⁴

The above-mentioned Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Grosier was a Jesuit abbot, who published in two volumes his *Description générale de la Chine*, from 1785–7. This quickly became a standard reference work for scholars.³⁵ The first volume of this book contains a chapter “De la Religion des Chinois,”³⁶ which includes a section on Buddhism or “Secte du Dieu Foé ou Fo.”³⁷ Grosier recounts the legendary story of the introduction of Buddhism to China during the reign of the emperor Ming-ti in the year AD 65. He depicts Buddha as a human being who was the subject of a metamorphosis and became a god. He also emphasizes the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Like de Guignes, Grosier also recounts the story of Buddha claiming that the truth amounts to nothingness,³⁸ and therefore he characterizes Buddhism as a “sect of atheism.”³⁹ The tone of Grosier’s account is entirely negative and derogatory; he regularly characterizes the beliefs of the Buddhists with terms such as “extravagant,” “absurd,” “superstitious,” “bizarre,” and “erroneous.”

In his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* Herder has a brief section on Tibet, which anticipates in some ways Hegel’s account of Buddhism.⁴⁰ Herder emphasizes the special character of Tibet as being dominated by religion. Like Hegel, he focuses on the doctrine of metempsychosis.⁴¹ He also discusses the role of the lamas as the unbroken chain of divine incarnations.⁴² With this focus, he thus, like Hegel, makes Lamaism synonymous with Buddhism. Also like Hegel, he is highly critical of this religion and

³⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, Part 2, p. 224, p. 226.

³¹ Ibid., vol. 1, Part 2, p. 227.

³² Ibid., vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 227–33.

³³ Ibid., vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 234–5.

³⁴ Ibid., vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 235ff.

³⁵ Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Grosier, *Description générale de la Chine, ou Tableau de l’état actuel de cet empire*, vols 1–2, Paris: Moutard 1785–87. (See LPWH, vol. 1, pp. 212–13 note; VPWG, vol. 1, pp. 538–40, note 121, 22. See also OW, p. 283.)

³⁶ Grosier, *Description générale de la Chine, ou Tableau de l’état actuel de cet empire*, vol. 1, pp. 541–618.

³⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 579–82.

³⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 581–2.

³⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 583.

⁴⁰ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vols 1–4, Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1784–91, vol. 3, pp. 27–34. (English translation: *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vols 1–2, trans. by T. Churchill, 2nd ed., London: J. Johnson 1803, vol. 2, pp. 22–9.)

⁴¹ See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 27, p. 32, p. 33. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 23, p. 27, p. 28.)

⁴² Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 28. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 23.)

way of life which he sees as encouraging a "superstitious absence of thought, and the perfect repose of nonentity."⁴³ In short, for both Herder and Hegel, Buddhism is a cult that celebrates nothingness. According to Herder, the goal of meditation leading to the elimination of the self and the will results in both mental and physical lethargy and sloth. Here Herder can be seen to be following the account given in the *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*.

In 1780 the Panchen Lama, Lobsang Palden Yeshe (1738–80), died in Peking. The Panchen Lama, whose traditional residence was the Tashilhunpo Monastery, is the second most important lama after the Dalai Lama. In 1782 the brother of the deceased lama informed per letter the British Governor of India, Warren Hastings (1732–1818), that a new incarnation had been found; this was Palden Tenpai Nyima (1782–1853), who then became the Seventh Panchen Lama of Tibet. Lieutenant Samuel Turner (1759–1802), an officer in the East India Company, was then dispatched from Calcutta to Tibet as an emissary for the British. At the beginning of December 1783, Turner arrived at Terpalang and was granted an audience with the infant Panchen Lama, whom he refers to as the Teesho Lama (in reference to the Tashilhunpo Monastery). Turner gives a detailed account of this in two articles that appeared in *Asiatick Researches* in 1798.⁴⁴ He published a much-expanded version of his journey and the audience in 1800 in the form of a book entitled, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet; Containing a Narrative for a Journey through Bootan, and Part of Tibet*.⁴⁵ This was a profoundly popular work that was translated into several European languages. Hegel was familiar with this account and refers to it on several occasions,⁴⁶ recounting in some detail Turner's quite sympathetic depiction of the Panchen Lama.

Hegel was also familiar with the work of Francis Buchanan (1762–1829) (also known as Francis Hamilton or Francis Buchanan-Hamilton), a Scottish physician who lived in India. Buchanan wrote a number of works on fields such as geography, zoology, and botany. He was regularly commissioned to

⁴³ See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 28. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 23.)

⁴⁴ Samuel Turner, "Extract of a Letter from Mr. Samuel Turner to the Honourable Governor General, dated Patna, 2d March, 1784" together with "Copy of an Account Given by Mr. Turner, of his Interview with Teshoo Lama at the Monastery of Terpalang, enclosed in Mr. Turner's Letter to the Honourable Governor General, dated Patna, 2d March, 1784" in *Asiatick Researches; or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia*, vol. 1, 1798 (Calcutta and London: Vernor and Hood), pp. 197–205. "An Account of a Journey to Tibet," in *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 207–20.

⁴⁵ Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet; Containing a Narrative for a Journey through Bootan, and Part of Tibet*, London: W. Bulmer and Co. 1800.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 315; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 218. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 578; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 474. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 735; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 623. *NR*, pp. 131–2. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 170; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 230f. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 299–300; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 228–9.

survey the territories belonging to the British East India Company. His main works are *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* (1807) and *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (1819).⁴⁷ Most important for our purposes is his "On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas," an article which appeared in *Asiatick Researches* in 1799.⁴⁸ Here Buchanan attempts to trace the origins and teachings of Buddhism in relation to Hinduism. He recounts many different versions of the person of the Buddha or, as he says, "Godama."⁴⁹ He comments critically on Groiser's above-mentioned account of the introduction of Buddhism to China.⁵⁰ In the analysis that Buchanan cites, Buddha was a man who became enlightened and "attained divinity."⁵¹

4.2. THE CONCEPT: THE CULT OF NOTHINGNESS

As has been noted, Hegel begins his discussions of the individual religions with an account of the special features of the concept of the divine in the given religion. Buddhism does not have a god, and so Hegel begins his analysis instead with what he takes to be the fundamental metaphysical principle of Buddhism. Drawing on the mentioned sources, he explains this as follows:

The principle of the Fo religion is that "nothing" is the principle, the beginning and the end of everything else. Our first ancestors came from nothing and to nothing they have returned. Everything that exists differs only through form, through quality. . . . However varied people and things may be, there is thus only one principle from which they stem, in which they are, through which they subsist, and to which they revert—this one principle is the nothing, completely unqualified, simple and pure.⁵²

⁴⁷ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, vols 1–3, London: T. Cadell & W. Davies and Black, Parry & Kingsbury 1807; *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company et al. 1819.

⁴⁸ Francis Buchanan, "On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas," in *Asiatick Researches; or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal for Enquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia*, London: J. Sewell et al., vol. 6, 1801 (1799 in the Calcutta edition), pp. 163–308.

⁴⁹ See his explanation of the different appellations, *ibid.*, pp. 259–64.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 261ff.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁵² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 312; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 214f. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 168; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 228f.: "The negative form of this elevation is the concentration of spirit to the infinite, and must first present itself under theological conditions. It is contained in the fundamental dogma, that nothingness is the principle of all things—that all proceeded from and returns to nothingness." See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 565; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 461.

From this description, it is not difficult to see why he and others conceived of Buddhism as a religion of nothingness or even as nihilistic. In the Judeo-Christian tradition God is conceived to have created the world out of nothing, but God himself is something positive, which invests everything with truth and meaning. God ensures that the universe has a positive purpose and develops in accordance with it. In Buddhism, by contrast, there is the fundamental principle of nothingness but without the deity or positive purpose. On this view, the universe thus appears without any deeper truth or meaning as conceived by a self-conscious entity.

Although it has been claimed that Hegel was the first to set forth the notion that Buddhism was a cult of nothingness,⁵³ in fact this was already a well-worn cliché among his sources. For example, the account given in *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande* rehearses the story about the Buddha revealing the truth of his doctrine to his disciples only when he was close to death. This work quotes the sage as saying the following: “*alle Dinge [würden] aus Nichts hervorgebracht, und wiederum in Nichts zurückkehrten; und dieses sey das Ende unserer Hoffnung.*”⁵⁴ Apparently in turn quoting this directly, Grosier, in exactly the same context, cites the dying Buddha as saying: “*c’est du néant que tout est sorti; c’est au néant que tout doit retourner; & c’est là qu’aboutissent toutes nos espérances.*”⁵⁵ De Guignes gives a virtually identical account, according to which Buddha claimed that the ultimate principle is “*le vuide & le néant, que tout en étoit sorti & que tout y retournoit.*”⁵⁶ In all these cases this constitutes a part of the general lament of what is taken to be the depravity and moral bankruptcy of this religion and its founder.

Although Buddhism, strictly speaking, does not have a god and thus is not theistic (despite the common view in Hegel’s day that the Buddha himself was considered a deity), the principle of nothingness is made into an absolute. For Hegel, this means that the divine is therefore conceived as nothingness. The external world is a colorful multitude of particularity, but this is not what is real. This is an illusion that captivates the interests and desires of the unwary. By contrast, the ultimate principle is conceived in Buddhism as just the opposite, as pure indeterminate nothingness, devoid of concreteness and particularity. Hegel explains this as follows: “the ultimate or highest [reality] is therefore nothing and not-being. . . . This is the absolute foundation, the indeterminate, the negated being of everything particular, so that all particular existences or actualities are only forms, and only the nothing has genuine independence, while in contrast all other actuality has none.”⁵⁷ Hegel’s

⁵³ See Droit, *The Cult of Nothingness: The Philosophers and the Buddha*, pp. 90–103.

⁵⁴ *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*, vol. 6, p. 360.

⁵⁵ Grosier, *Description générale de la Chine*, vol. 1, p. 582.

⁵⁶ De Guignes, *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux*, vol. 1, Part 2, p. 224.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 565; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 461.

speculative understanding of the dialectic of universality and particularity is in evidence here. The universal is the concept of nothingness, whereas the particular is the rich world of sense and actuality, which is ultimately illusory.

Given that nothingness is the metaphysical truth of the universe and in the end all hopes end in nothingness, it follows that the proper disposition should be to eliminate all of one's hopes and desires in order to be in harmony with this truth. Hegel dubs Buddhism the "religion of being-within-self" since it enjoins the individual to retreat into himself and to block out all external things that can be the cause of vain hope and desire. The goal is to extinguish all passions and interests in the external world and thus to make oneself immune to its vicissitudes and the suffering caused by them. Hegel explains, "Here consciousness is defined by peaceful being-within-itself, barbarity is softened, desire [becomes] the transcending of desire, a renunciation that entails no sacrifice."⁵⁸ According to this conception, enlightenment and blessedness are attained by reaching this state of indifference to the external world and communing with the divine. True freedom is only possible when one releases oneself from the passions of daily life and becomes one with the universal nothingness of the universe. For Hegel, Buddhism is thus a religion of silent contemplation, where one withdraws into oneself.

The highest state that one can attain to is thus one where the individual has no desires and is free from dependence on the illusory things of the material world. Hegel outlines the principles for correct action based on this view:

one must immerse oneself in this nothing, in the eternal tranquility of the nothing generally, in the substantial in which all determinations cease, where there is no virtue or intelligence, where all movement annuls itself. . . . To be blissful, human beings themselves must strive, through ceaseless internal mindfulness, to will nothing, to want [nothing], and to do nothing.⁵⁹

In his account of this ethical aspect of Buddhism, Hegel can again be seen to follow his sources closely. Indeed, his analysis is close to being a paraphrase of Grosier's explanation:

*Ce principe universel est très-pur, exempt de toute altération, très-subtil, très-simple; il est dans un repos continu; il n'a ni vertu, ni puissance, ni intelligence: bien plus, son essence consiste à être sans action, sans intelligence, sans désirs. Pour être heureux, il faut, par de continuelles méditations, par de fréquentes victoires sur soi-même, s'efforcer de se rendre semblable à ce principe, &, pour y parvenir, s'accoutumer à ne faire rien, à ne vouloir rien, à ne sentir rien, à ne désirer rien.*⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 309; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 212.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 565f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 462.

⁶⁰ Grosier, *Description générale de la Chine*, vol. 1, pp. 583f. De Guignes portrays the Buddhist as worshipping a highly abstract, transcendent supreme being, and "toujours occupé à méditer sur

Hegel continues,

With the attainment of this state of perfect impartiality or absence of concern, there is no longer any question of virtue and vice, reward and punishment, atonement, immortality of the soul, worship, and so on. All this has passed away, and human sanctity consists in finding union, in this silence, with God. . . . once human beings have reached this level of perfection, there is no longer any change, their souls have no further wandering to fear, for they become completely identical with the God Fo.⁶¹

Here again his source seems clearly to be Grosier, who writes:

*Dés que l'on parvient à cet état heureux d'insensibilité, il n'est plus question de vices ou de vertus, de peines ou de récompenses, de providence, d'immortalité pour les âmes. Toute la sainteté consiste à cesser d'être, à se confondre avec le néant. . . . Dès le moment où l'homme s'est élevé à ce degré de perfection, il n'est plus pour lui de vicissitudes, d'avenir, de transmigrations à craindre, parce qu'il a cessé d'être, & qu'il est devenu parfaitement semblable au Dieu Fo.*⁶²

Given how heavily reliant Hegel is on his sources here, it seems problematic to claim that he alone is responsible for the view that Buddhism is a doctrine of nothingness.⁶³

While the divine itself is conceived as one, its appearance can be manifold. There can thus be in principle many people who attain to the divine by means of discipline and meditation. Given the goal of this religion, it makes sense that there are monks and monasteries for people who wish to dedicate themselves to attaining the highest state possible: "Tranquility and repose are the keynote of the character of the community, and this gives rise to the establishment of numerous monasteries and great priesthoods, which pass their time in silent contemplation of the eternal, taking no part in worldly interests and concerns."⁶⁴ In Hegel's sources this is generally regarded as an expression of the absurdity and self-destructive nature of this religion. The Buddhists are portrayed as being so absorbed in meditation and austerities that they neglect even to make a living for themselves or take care of the usual

ce grand Dieu, ne cherche qu'à s'anéantir lui-même pour aller le rejoindre & se perdre dans le sein de la Divinité qui a tiré toutes choses du néant, & et qui elle-même n'est point matière. C'est-là ce qu'ils veulent entendre par le vuide & le néant." De Guignes, *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux*, vol. 1, Part 2, p. 226.

⁶¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 312f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 215. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 565; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 462.

⁶² Grosier, *Description générale de la Chine*, vol. 1, p. 584.

⁶³ This has been noted before. See App, "The Tibet of the Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer," pp. 28f.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 309; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 212. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 564; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 461.

things that are necessary for civil society to function. In the passage quoted above Hegel refers to the Chinese emperor closing many monasteries since the monks did not pay taxes or farm the land.⁶⁵

Hegel is critical of this Buddhist view of what correct action should be since he sees it as eliminating all possibility for the development of subjective freedom. The elimination of desires, interests, and hopes rules out any sense of the cultivation of personality or character. Individuality is not important here; on the contrary, it should be eliminated. Hegel claims therefore that in Buddhism, the “element of freedom is wanting.”⁶⁶ To have hopes, desires, and goals is, according to Hegel, what it is to be a human being. To exercise subjective freedom means to make rational choices in accordance with the universal based on these things. But if these hopes, desires, and interests are eliminated, then everything that makes human beings special and able to be free is also eliminated. The goal, according to Hegel, should not be to eliminate the desires but rather to transform them into something higher, which is in keeping with a genuinely human life. Desires are not bad in themselves since they are a part of what makes us human. Through education and upbringing we are taught to fulfill our desires as beings of spirit and not of nature. Subjective freedom thus means learning to control our desires, developing ourselves as individuals and not suppressing our individuality. Free action in the world should take into account our desires and interests and not suppress them, for to eliminate desires is to fail to recognize human subjectivity.

4.3. THE LAMAS

As noted, Hegel associates Buddhism with what he dubs “Lamaism.” What he refers to here is not Buddhism in general but the special Tibetan form of it, which focuses on monks or teachers, called “lamas.” The Tibetans believe that there are a number of Buddhas or so-called Bodhisattvas. These are conceived as sacred individuals, who, due to their pure and austere life, have achieved a state that makes them worthy of Nirvana. But they remain in the world as teachers in order to assist others in their attempts to reach the same state. Hegel explains to his auditors: “There are several such chief lamas, in particular three, the Dalai Lama in northern Tibet, the Lama in southern Tibet, and then another leader of this kind out in Russian Mongolia or Siberia, who are

⁶⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 311; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 214.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 168; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 228.

worshiped as gods.”⁶⁷ As noted above, in his account of the lamas, Hegel is almost entirely dependent on the first-hand account given by Samuel Turner.

According to the Tibetan conception, the Dalai Lama is the highest lama. The idea is that he, like the other lamas, is conceived to be the reincarnation of his predecessors. When he dies, a successor is sought, who seems to possess the qualities of the deceased. For this reason Hegel takes one key feature of this religion to be the cult surrounding the person of the Buddha or the lamas: “God is grasped as nothing, as essence generally . . . this essential God is nevertheless known as a specific, immediate human being, as Fo, Buddha, or Dalai Lama.”⁶⁸

Hegel explains the relation between Buddhism and Lamaism and justifies his treatment of the two together. He acknowledges that there is “a slight difference between the Fo religion and Lamaism,” but claims this “is only superficial.”⁶⁹ But he elaborates that in Lamaism “the side of reality or the shape [assumed by spirit] is a particular self-consciousness, an actual, living human being.”⁷⁰ More importantly, Hegel claims that the key difference between the two religious directions is that the non-Tibetan Buddhists worship Buddha as a dead person; by contrast, the Tibetans revere the dead Buddha but as a living presence in his successors,⁷¹ that is, in the form of the lamas. It is said of the Buddha himself “that eight thousand times he has incarnated himself in existence as a human being.”⁷² Hegel’s understanding here is based on an inaccuracy: the Buddhists do not revere Buddha himself as a god either alive or dead. But to Hegel’s credit, it must be added that his sources consistently portrayed the Buddha as a deity.

As noted in the previous section, the goal of this religion is to imitate the Buddha and to extinguish all desires, thus deadening oneself to the world. The Dalai Lama is the one who achieves this most perfectly and so is regarded as being possessed by the divine. Perhaps under the influence of Turner, Hegel gives a fairly positive description of the Dalai Lama as a person, despite his criticism of this conception of the divine.⁷³

One might think that Hegel would be sympathetic to the view of the Tibetans since it conceives of the divine in human form as does Christianity.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 307; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 211. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 315; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 217. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 576; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 472. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 735; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 623.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 570; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 466f.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 307; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 211. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 577; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 473.

⁷⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 307; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 211.

⁷¹ See *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 170; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 231. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 563; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 460. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 736; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 623.

⁷² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 577; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 473.

⁷³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 576–9; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 472–4.

However, he hastens to distinguish this conception from the Christian doctrine of the divine incarnation in Christ:

When God is worshipped in human shape in the Christian religion, that is something altogether different; for the divine essence is there envisioned in the man who has suffered, died, risen again, and ascended to heaven. That is not humanity in its sensuous, immediate existence, but a humanity that bears upon its face the shape of spirit.⁷⁴

For Hegel, the key point of Christianity is that with the death of Christ, the Son returns to the Father. With this the particular, the Son, is no longer the main thing. Thus it is a mistake to remain fixated on the empirical person of Christ since this is not the end of the dialectical development. But, according to Hegel, this is in effect where Lamaism remains since it focuses on actual, particular individuals in their physical existence. By contrast, in Christianity what is worshipped is Spirit, which is not a particular, physical entity. It is the particular that has returned to the universal—the speculative unity of the two. Buddhism and Lamaism are, on his view, not even close to realizing this deep truth.

According to Hegel, this conception of the divine, in contrast to the Christian conception is wholly indeterminate and has no content: here at the stage of being-within-itself, “eternal being has still no content. . . . There is as yet no inner determinacy.”⁷⁵ Hegel’s evidence for this is the succession of the Lamas: “death brings no interruption in regard to the substantive essence.”⁷⁶ The point is that the specific individuality of the lamas is not recognized. They are, so to speak, the incarnation of someone else, and they have no personality or individuality on their own.

4.4. IMMORTALITY AND REINCARNATION

Hegel also addresses the Buddhist conception of immortality. He explains that the highest state of perfection is the attainment of Nirvana. This is the stage where one attains the level of the divine, according to Hegel’s understanding:

Within one’s being one has to behave in this negative way, to resist not what is external but only oneself. The state that is represented as a human being’s goal, this state of unity and purity, the Buddhists call Nirvana, and it is described in the following way. When one is no longer subjected to the burdens of stress, old age,

⁷⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 570n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 467n.

⁷⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 310; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 213.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

sickness, and death, Nirvana has been attained; one is then identical with God, is regarded as God himself, has become Buddha.⁷⁷

This elevated state involves a demonstration of one's invulnerability to the changes of the world. In this sense one is considered immortal. Hegel's source here is presumably Buchanan's "On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas."⁷⁸ Here Hegel explains further:

While Taoism presents the attaining of immortality through meditation and withdrawal into oneself as the highest destination of human beings, it does not in that connection declare that the soul persists intrinsically as such and essentially, that the spirit is immortal, but only that human beings can make themselves immortal through the process of abstraction and that they should do so. The thought of immortality lies precisely in the fact that, in thinking, human beings are present to themselves in their freedom. In thinking, one is utterly independent; nothing else can intrude upon one's freedom—one relates only to oneself and nothing else can have a claim upon one.⁷⁹

Once this state of absolute indifference to the "other," that is, the external world is attained, then not even death can destroy the person. One might think that this view, with its focus on thinking and the inwardness of the individual, would be attractive to Hegel. But Hegel is quick to point out that these concepts in Buddhism are far different from what he understands by subjective freedom. For the Buddhists "thinking" means a kind of mental discipline that makes meditation possible, but it is not what Hegel understands by thought that determines the individual's action by means of reason. The focus on the inwardness of the individual in Buddhism does not serve to develop the individuality necessary for subjective freedom, but rather to undermine it.

Hegel then turns his attention to the notion of reincarnation. Although the physical body may die, it is impossible to believe that the exalted individual, who has made himself immune to all mundane changes can also die. Therefore, it is a logical conclusion that this person continues to live somewhere else,

⁷⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 566f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 463f. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 314; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 217. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 736; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 623.

⁷⁸ Buchanan, "On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas." Buchanan cites the following account (pp. 179f.): "the *Burma* writings alledge, that in death, whether of man, beast, or of any living being . . . the soul perishes with the body, and they alledge, that after this dissolution, out of the same materials another being arises, which, according to the good or bad actions of the former life, becomes either a man or an animal, or a *Nat* or a *Rupa*, &c. And they further alledge, that beings are continually revolving in these changes for the duration of one or more worlds, until they have performed such actions as entitle them to *Nieban*, the most perfect of all states, consisting in a kind of annihilation, in which beings are free from change, misery, death, sickness, or old age."

⁷⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 568f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 465.

namely, in another body.⁸⁰ According to this view, the soul is the key element, and the different forms of incarnation are contingent. But the soul is not necessarily attached to any one of the concrete, existing forms, which give it actuality in the real world. The soul apart from these concrete forms and actual existence is thus abstract. The goal of the difficult exercise of meditation is to deaden oneself to the world, for it is only then that the endless cycle of reincarnation can be broken. Only in this way is one's inner being liberated from the countless sensuous forms.

According to Hegel's view, this religion, like the one before it, descends into superstition.⁸¹ The explanation for this, in Hegel's mind, seems to have something to do with the fact that the souls can be reincarnated in a multitude of different forms. From this it naturally arises that some forms are more favorable than others. It is better to be reincarnated as a human being than as a horse or an insect. However, given that the latter possibility is always a real one, all forms of life, even the most insignificant are revered since they might contain the souls of people. Thus one should not harm any living thing, no matter how seemingly small or insignificant. Hegel explains:

The principle doctrine of the Fo religion is the dogma of *metempsychosis*, or transmigration of souls. This is the source and origin of innumerable masses of idols and images that are worshiped wherever the veneration of Fo holds sway. Four-footed beasts, birds, insects, and reptiles, in a word the lowliest forms of animal life, have temples and are venerated because God in his reincarnations can dwell in individuals of all kinds, and each animal body can be inhabited by the human soul.⁸²

This is presumably the explanation for why this is categorized among the forms of "natural religion." Like Hinduism and the Egyptian religion, the divine is considered to exist in the form of animals and other objects of nature.

Hegel notes that this opens the door for the intercession of priests, who can influence the reincarnations and help one to avoid a move downward in the hierarchy. He explains:

Here magic again enters on the scene, the mediation of the human priests who belong to the higher realm of the supersensible and yet at the same time have power over the configurations that humans assume; in this way the aspect of power and magic comes to be associated once more with this theoretical image. Adherents of the Foe religion are in this respect extremely superstitious. They represent to themselves that our human shape passes over into every possible shape, that of a cat a snake, a mule.⁸³

⁸⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 309f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 212f.

⁸¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 313n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 216n.

⁸² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 311f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 214.

⁸³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 313; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 216.

The intercession of priests in this manner is then invariably bound up with ceremonies and sacred practices, which, for Hegel, all reflect superstition. Hegel recounts the following episode that he read in the *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*:

A missionary tells the story of a man on his deathbed who had heard of the Christian religion who summoned him and complained that a Bonze—that is, one of the priests or wise men who knows what goes on in the other world—had told him that as he was currently in the emperor's service, he would remain in it after his death, his soul migrating into one of the emperor's post-horses, and that he was then to do his duty loyally, not kicking, neighing, biting, or stumbling, and being content with little fodder.⁸⁴

Hegel clearly takes this to illustrate both the absurdity of the belief in general and the corruption of the priests in particular.

Hegel's overall assessment of Buddhism is only slightly more positive than his view of the ancient Chinese religion. While both have a conception of the divine as undifferentiated universality, Buddhism advances slightly further by developing the conception of the possibility of communing with the divine by means of meditation and strict discipline. Whereas in the Chinese religion, only the emperor had a real relation to the divine, here in Buddhism this is also in principle open to a whole host of priests and monks. Moreover, whereas in the ancient Chinese religion the divine remained in pure universality, the divine in Buddhism comes out of its universality and is incarnated in specific physical beings of nature. But there is still a long way to go in the development of the world religions since there is still no inkling of the higher principle of spirit, and the focus remains on the physical objects of nature.

⁸⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 313f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 216f. *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*, vol. 6, p. 362: "Als er [le Comte] in der Provinz Schen-si war: so wurde er eines Tages zu einer kranken Person gerufen, welches ein alter Mann von siebenzig Jahren war, den er taufen sollte. Es scheint, als ob ihm der Kaiser zu seinem Unterhalte eine kleine Besoldung angewiesen habe. Die Bonzen hatten ihn versichert, daß er, wenn er aus Dankbarkeit genöthiget seyn sollte, ihm in der andern Welt zu dienen, unfehlbar in eines von den Postpferden fahren würde, welche Briefschaften von Hofe in die Provinzen tragen. Daher vermahnten sie ihn ernstlich, daß er ja nicht stolpern, ausschlagen, heißen, oder sonst jemanden Schaden thun sollte. Sie redeten ihm auch zu, daß er geschwind laufen, wenig fressen und geduldig seyn sollte."

Hinduism

The Religion of Imagination

Hegel now turns his attention to Hinduism, which he calls “The Religion of Imagination” or, with another translation, “The Religion of Fantasy.”¹ He has shorter treatments of this in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,² and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,³ and it is mentioned many times in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*.⁴ There is also a brief discussion in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.⁵ Of special importance is his long book review of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s treatise on the *Bhagavad-Gita*.⁶ Hegel’s study of Hinduism came during the period when there was a rapidly growing interest in India, indeed, an Indomania, in the German-speaking world. He meticulously kept up with the most recent publications in the field⁷ and knew personally most all of the major figures doing work on

¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 316–52; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 219–54. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 579–609; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 475–504. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 731–5; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 619–22. *NR*, pp. 137–85. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 1–47; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 355–400.

² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 139–67; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 191–226. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 251–303, especially pp. 273–81; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 164–233, especially pp. 192–204. *OW*, pp. 343–410.

³ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 420–1; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 530–1.

⁴ While Hegel does not have an independent treatment of India in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, he does mention different aspects of Indian art and culture sporadically throughout these lectures.

⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 573; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 458–74.

⁶ Hegel, “Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gita bekannte Episode des Mahabharata. Von Wilhelm von Humboldt. Berlin, 1826,” *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, 1827, Erster Artikel (January), nos. 7–8, pp. 51–63; Zweiter Artikel (October 1827), nos. 181–8, pp. 1441–92. (English translation: *On the Episode of the Mahabharata Known by the Name Bhagavad-Gita by Wilhelm von Humboldt*, trans. by Herbert Herring, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research 1995.) *Jub.*, vol. 20, pp. 57–131. These texts are conveniently collected in Aakash Singh Rathore and Rimina Mohapatra, *Hegel’s India: A Reinterpretation, with Texts*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2017.

⁷ See Ignatius Viyagappa, *G.W.F. Hegel’s Concept of Indian Philosophy*, Rome: Gregorian University Press 1980, p. 60: “no one can dispute the fact that he had read the best of the then available works on India and wanted to uncover their significance in the context of his own system as well as world history.”

Sanskrit texts in Prussia and the German states. Despite the fact that Hegel's interpretation of Hinduism might at first glance appear to be a rather esoteric theme, in fact there is a strikingly large amount of secondary literature on this topic.⁸

The rise of European interest in India came at the end of the eighteenth century, and the period when Hegel was lecturing on this material in the 1820s corresponds to the introduction of Indology and Sanskrit Studies as scholarly disciplines at the German and Prussian universities.⁹ Interest in India was particularly keen among the German Romantics who were attracted by what they regarded as the emotional and primeval elements in Indian art and literature, which they regarded as a fruitful alternative to Enlightenment rationalism. A part of Hegel's critical evaluation of Hinduism can be seen as one element in his ongoing criticism of German Romanticism in general. But the interest in India was by no means confined to the Romantics; on the contrary, ancient Indian philosophy, religion, literature, and art attracted many of the greatest luminaries of German intellectual life of the day. Thus, Hegel was not alone in this interest, and in the academic atmosphere at the time he could hardly have avoided giving some account of India in his works.

5.1. THE BIRTH OF INDOLOGY

It was natural that the British scholars, with their colonial interests, initially led the way in the study of Indian culture (although the German scholars in time caught up with and surpassed them).¹⁰ The British colonial administrators and officials of the East India Company found it prudent to learn about the customs and traditions of the colonized peoples, and for this reason many of them pursued studies of Indian literature or religion as a leisure activity.¹¹ One important result of these efforts was the journal *Asiatick Researches*, which was the organ of the Asiatick Society of Bengal (founded in 1784), where the

⁸ See the Bibliography. See also the useful bibliography in Rathore and Mohapatra, *Hegel's India: A Reinterpretation, with Texts*, pp. 284–6.

⁹ See Douglas T. McGetchin, "The Study of Sanskrit in German Universities, 1818–1914," in his *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany*, Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2009, pp. 76–101.

¹⁰ See McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 31–40. Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, New York: Columbia University Press 1984, p. 53. See also Christine Maillard, "'Indomane' um 1800: ästhetische, religiöse und ideologische Aspekte," in *Der Deutschen Morgenland. Bilder des Orients in der deutschen Literatur und Kultur von 1770 bis 1850*, ed. by Charis Goer and Michael Hofmann, Munich: Wilhelm Fink 2008, pp. 67–83.

¹¹ See Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007, pp. 18ff.

leading lights were Charles Wilkins (1749–1836), William Jones (1746–94), and Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765–1837).¹² This was an important and widely read publication series that for the first time gave an inkling of the diversity and richness of Indian culture to the European reader. It covered a vast variety of topics and fields, among others, language, history, religion, philosophy, and art. Its popularity is attested by the fact that it saw several reprints and some of the initial volumes were also translated into French (as *Recherches Asiaticques*) and German (as *Asiatisches Magazin*). Hegel seems to have been an avid reader of the journal and refers to a number of its articles in different contexts.¹³ The journal thus did much to establish Indology as a scholarly discipline.

William Jones' official position was as a Supreme Court judge in Bengal, and in order to familiarize himself with Hindu legal codes and views, he translated some Indian works on law and history, most importantly *The Laws of Manu*.¹⁴ In 1784 Jones presented a paper to the members of the Asiatick Society entitled "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India."¹⁵ In this work he argued for a common source of the Greco-Roman religion in ancient India. In 1786 he gave another influential lecture at the Asiatick Society in which he pointed out the linguistic similarities between Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin.¹⁶ He returns to the line of thought from his previous article and argues that the Greek and Roman gods are the familiar versions of what are the same deities in older form in India; in short, the Greeks and the Romans received their gods and religion in large part from India.¹⁷ This proved to be

¹² *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, vols 1–20, Calcutta: Manuel Cantopher 1788–1839. See Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 2007, p. 124. Viyagappa, G.W.F. Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy, pp. 32ff., pp. 39ff. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 51ff.

¹³ See, for example, J. Bentley, "On the Hindu Systems of Astronomy, and Their Connection with History in Ancient and Modern Time," *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 8, Calcutta 1805, pp. 193–244. (LPWH, vol. 1, p. 289; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 215.) Francis Wilford, "An Essay on the Sacred Isles in the West, with Other Essays Connected with that Work" *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 8, Calcutta 1805, pp. 245–368; vol. 9, Calcutta 1807, pp. 32–243. (LPR, vol. 2, p. 337; VPR, Part 2, p. 239. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 155; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 212. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 164; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 223.)

¹⁴ *Institutes of Hindu Law; or The Ordinances of Menu, According to the Gloss of Cullūca, Comprising the Indian System of Duties Religious and Civil*, trans. by William Jones, Calcutta: Printed by the Order of Government 1794. See Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, pp. 24ff. Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, pp. 122–6. Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794*, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 2011.

¹⁵ William Jones, "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India," *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, vol. 1, 1788, pp. 221–75.

¹⁶ William Jones, "The Third Anniversary Discourse, Delivered 2 February 1786," *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, vol. 1, 1788, pp. 415–31; see pp. 422f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

a provocative thesis that inspired later authors. It can truly be said that these theses—one about language and one about religion—came to constitute two of the signal episodes in the European reception of Indology in the coming decades. Also of great importance, in 1789 Jones published the first English translation of the drama *Sakuntala*, a work by the most famous Sanskrit poet Kalidasa from the 4th or 5th century AD.¹⁸ This translation proved profoundly influential when it was translated into German. Hegel refers directly to Jones' work in a highly deferential manner.¹⁹

Henry Thomas Colebrooke is often referred to as the successor of Jones.²⁰ In 1798 he published an English translation of a Sanskrit legal text that Jones had left unfinished.²¹ In 1805 he published his Sanskrit grammar.²² Colebrooke was also interested in Hindu religious practices, and also in 1805 his essay "On the Vedas or Sacred Writings of the Hindus" appeared.²³ He was the head of the Asiatick Society from 1806 to 1815. In London he founded the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1823 and helped to inaugurate its publication organ *Transactions* in 1827. Hegel was a regular reader of this journal.²⁴

Another of the founding members of the Asiatick Society was Charles Wilkins. Originally trained as a printer, Wilkins went to Bengal in 1770 to work for the East India Company. He immediately set about learning Sanskrit and soon mastered it. He used his skills as a printer to help to create the typefaces for the first printing press for Persian and Bengali. In 1785 Wilkins produced his greatest achievement, the first English translation of the

¹⁸ *Sacotalá, or The Fatal Ring: An Indian Drama by Cálidás*, [trans. by William Jones], Calcutta: Joseph Cooper 1789.

¹⁹ See *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 159; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 217. See also *Episode*, pp. 3f.; *Jub.*, vol. 20, pp. 57f.

²⁰ For Colebrooke's biography, see Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, pp. 37ff.

²¹ *A Digest of Hindu Law, on Contracts and Successions with a Commentary by Jagannát'ha Tercapanchánana*, vols 1–4, trans. by H.T. Colebrooke, Calcutta: Printed at the Honorable Company's Press 1797–98. (In 1801 this work was reprinted in a three-volume edition in London: "Reprinted for J. Debrett, Piccadilly, by Wilson and Co. Oriental Press, Wild Court.")

²² H.T. Colebrooke, *A Grammar of the Sanskrit Language*, Calcutta: Printed at the Honorable Company's Press 1805. (This volume is designated as volume 1, but no further volumes appeared.)

²³ H.T. Colebrooke, "On the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindus," in *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Enquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, vol. 8, 1805, pp. 369–476.

²⁴ Hegel, *Episode*, p. 27, *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 69. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 127; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 163: In the footnote to this passage reference is made to Colebrooke's article "On the Philosophy of the Hindus, Part I," from the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 1, Part 1, London: Parbury, Allen, & Co. 1827, pp. 19–43. See also *Phil. of Mind*, § 573, p. 307; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 465.

Bhagavad-Gita,²⁵ a work with which Hegel was familiar.²⁶ Wilkins' articles in the first volume of *Asiatick Researches* laid the foundation for the field of Indian epigraphy.²⁷ He returned to England in 1786 and in 1800 took the position of librarian for the Indian collection of the East India Company.

Interest in Indian culture in Britain slowly diminished in the wake of the biting criticism from, on the one hand, Christian evangelical circles, and on the other, liberal utilitarianism.²⁸ The earlier colonial officials had prohibited missionaries from coming to India in an effort to avoid antagonizing the local populations. This earned them the disdain of the conservative religious interests in England, who joined forces and managed to overturn the prohibition in Parliament in 1813, and with this the missionary movement got underway. Upon arriving in India, the missionaries were quickly scandalized by what they regarded as the sexual depravity of the followers of Indian religion, which they believed they saw portrayed in the ancient paintings, reliefs, and statuary.

The criticism from the side of utilitarianism came from, among others, James Mill (1773–1836), whose three-volume *History of British India*, published in 1817,²⁹ portrayed Indian religion as backward superstition and Indian political history as based on despotism. Hegel refers to this work in his lectures.³⁰ The utilitarians advocated a radical reform of India by instituting democratic institutions, building new infrastructure based on modern technology such as railways, and teaching the Indians English in order to connect them better with the modern world. Such measures, it was thought, would liberate India from its ignorance and darkness. While the initial interest in India was fueled by a conviction that there was something unique and valuable about Indian culture that in some ways was even superior to that of Europe, only a generation later the view was just the opposite. The initial

²⁵ *The Bhagvat-Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon; in Eighteen Lectures; with Notes. Translated from the Original, in the Sanskreet, or Ancient Language of the Brahmans*, by Charles Wilkins, Senior Merchant in the service of the Honorable The East India Company, on their Bengal Establishment, London: C. Nourse 1785. See Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, p. 22.

²⁶ See also *Episode*, p. 9; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 60. *Episode*, p. 11; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 61.

²⁷ Charles Wilkins, "An Inscription on a Pillar near Buddal," *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, vol. 1, 1788, pp. 131–41. "A Letter from Charles Wilkins, Esq. to the Secretary," *ibid.*, pp. 279–83. "A Translation of a Sanskrit Inscription, copied from a Stone at Booddha-Gaya," *ibid.*, pp. 284–7.

²⁸ See McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 33ff. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, pp. 62ff, pp. 78ff.

²⁹ James Mill, *History of British India*, vols 1–3, London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy 1817. A second edition followed in 1820, and a six-volume third edition in 1826. After Hegel's death a ten-volume fourth and fifth edition appeared in 1848 and 1858 respectively. See Ernst Schulin, "Indien" in his *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1958, pp. 80f. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, pp. 63ff. Viyagappa, *G.W.F. Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy*, p. 38. See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 329; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 231f.

³⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 329; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 232.

impetus of Indology in Great Britain was gradually quelled by the rising belief that there was nothing of any lasting value in Indian culture and that the colonial officials were self-interested, corrupt opportunists.

France, with its many colonial holdings in Asia, was a great rival to Britain in the field of Asian Studies.³¹ In 1787 Joseph-Pascal Parraud (1752–1832) published a French translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* based on Wilkins' English version.³² In 1801–2 the French orientalist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805), after having lived in India for several years, published a widely read Latin translation of the *Upanishads*, based not on the original Sanskrit but rather on Persian texts.³³ The autodidact Antoine-Léonard de Chézy (1773–1832) became the first professor of Sanskrit in Europe with his appointment to the Collège de France in 1815. The French Société Asiatique was founded in 1822.³⁴ Its organ of dissemination was the *Journal Asiatique*, which began publication in the same year (and still continues to this day). The French also had an outstanding collection of original manuscripts in Sanskrit at the Bibliothèque Nationale, whose curator was the philologist and orientalist Louis Mathieu Langlès (1763–1824). This is presumably the “manuscript library” that Hegel says he visited during his trip to Paris in 1827.³⁵ For these reasons Paris was the destination of scholars throughout Europe who wished to study Sanskrit.

While initially scholars in the German-speaking states were virtually entirely dependent on the British and the French for their information about India, by the time Hegel was lecturing on the philosophy of religion in the 1820s they had begun to establish themselves in the field. Indology soon became a major formative trend in German cultural life of the day.³⁶

³¹ See McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 41–54. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 64–7.

³² Abbé Parraud, *Le Bhagavat-Geeta, ou Dialogues de Kreeschna et d'Arjoon; Contenant un Précis de la Religion et de la Morale des Indiens, Traduit du Sanscrit, la Langue sacrée des Brahmes, en Anglais, Par M. Charles Wilkins; Et de l'Anglais en Français, par M. Parraud, de l'Académie des Arcades de Rome*, London and Paris: Buisson 1787.

³³ Anquetil-Duperron, *Oupnek'hat (id est Secretum tegendum): opus ipsa in India rarissimum, continens antiquam et arcanam seu theologicam et philosophicam, doctrinam è quatuor sacris Indorum libris, Rak beid, Djedjr beid, Sam beid, Athrban beid, excerptam, ad verbum, è Persico idiomate, Samscreticis vocabulis intermixto, in Latinum conversum; Dissertationibus et Annotationibus, difficiliora explanatibus, illustratum*, vols 1–2, Argentorati [Strasbourg]: Typis et impensis Fratrum Levrault 1801–2. (Note that the title *Oupnek'hat* is a corruption of the word *Upanishad*.) See LPR, vol. 2, p. 330; VPR, Part 2, p. 232.

³⁴ See Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, p. 146. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 82f.

³⁵ Hegel, *Letters*, p. 655; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 562, p. 189: “I met a few scholars and visited the large manuscript library, by far the richest in Europe.”

³⁶ See Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*. A. Leslie Willson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism*, Durham: Duke University Press 1964. Walter Leifer, *India and the Germans: 500 Years of Indo-German Contacts*, Bombay: Shakuntala Publishing House 1971. Nicholas A. Germana, *The Orient of Europe: The Mythical Image of India and Competing Images of German National Identity*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*,

During a stay in England, the colorful traveler Georg Forster (1754–94) translated William Jones' English version of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* into German. Schiller published a part of the translation in his journal *Thalia* in 1790.³⁷ Then the entire translation appeared in 1791 and immediately became very popular.³⁸ It was the first complete work of Indian literature ever to appear in German. Forster also added a detailed commentary apparatus to the text, something that Jones had omitted since he could assume his English readers to have some familiarity with Indian culture. Forster's translation was the initial inspiration to take up the study of Indian culture for many of the German figures who would later become important scholars in philosophy, literature, and linguistics. Forster's translation became celebrated among authors such as Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, Novalis, Jean Paul, Goethe, Bettina von Arnim, Heinrich Heine, Christian Gottlob Heyne, and E.T.A. Hoffmann.³⁹ The image of India that most educated Germans had at the time came directly from this translation. Many aspects of the exotic work struck a chord in the German Romantics.⁴⁰ After Forster's early death in Paris in 1794, his translation continued to grow in success and was published in 1803 in a second edition, which was edited by Herder (and of which Hegel owned a copy).⁴¹

Among the philosophers in the German-speaking world, Herder was the first to attempt to give a general account of India, which he described in the third volume (from 1787) of his philosophy of history.⁴² While his assessment

pp. 57–64. Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker*, Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler 1960. Bradley L. Herling, *The German Gita: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the German Reception of Indian Thought, 1778–1831*, New York: Routledge 2006.

³⁷ "Scenen aus dem Sacontala, oder dem unglücklichen Ring, einem indischen, 2000 Jahr alten Drama," *Thalia*, vol. 3, Zehntes Heft, 1790, pp. 72–88.

³⁸ *Sakuntala oder der entscheidende Ring. Ein indisches Schauspiel von Kalidas*, Aus den Ursprachen Sanskrit und Prakrit ins Englische und aus diesem ins Deutsche übersetzt mit Erläuterungen von Georg Forster, Mainz and Leipzig: Johann Peter Fischer 1791. See McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 56–65. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 2–3. Willson, *A Mythical Image*, pp. 72–9. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 57–64. Leifer, *India and the Germans*, pp. 75–90.

³⁹ See McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 57f.

⁴⁰ See Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 203–21.

⁴¹ *Sakuntala oder der entscheidende Ring. Ein indisches Schauspiel von Kalidas*, Aus den Ursprachen Sanskrit und Prakrit ins Englische und aus diesem ins Deutsche übersetzt mit Erläuterungen von Georg Forster, Zweite rechtmässige von I.G. v. Herder besorgte Ausgabe, Frankfurt am Main: August Hermann dem Jüngern 1803. (This second edition appears in Hegel's library as number 788.) Hegel refers to this work in *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 159; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 217. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 164; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 223. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 272; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 192. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 293; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 220.) For the impact of this work, see Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 50–7. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 57–64. Glasenapp, *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker*, pp. 14–24.

⁴² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vols 1–4, Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1784–91, vol. 3, pp. 35–45. (English translation: *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vols 1–2, trans. by T. Churchill, 2nd ed., London:

there is mixed, he gives a generally quite flattering picture of India.⁴³ Herder's knowledge of India in this work was based largely on travel reports and not primary texts. Later, however, he read with avid interest the early translations of the Sanskrit material. Herder tends to idealize ancient India as an idyllic period of human innocence, a kind of biblical paradise, which was subsequently corrupted by Muslims and Europeans. Thus he was critical of the Christian missionaries' work in India. In this sense he has a surprisingly sympathetic disposition towards the foreign Indian culture and a surprisingly critical one towards his own. Herder's idealized picture of ancient India proved to be influential for the German Romantics. When Forster's German translation of the *Sakuntala* appeared in 1791, it struck Herder as a revelation. He wrote an article about this work in the *Zerstreute Blätter* in 1792 under the title, "Ueber ein morgenländisches Drama."⁴⁴ His preface to the second edition of the translation amounts to an unqualified encomium for the work. In the *Sakuntala* Herder found confirmed his image of India as representing the original naïve, innocent stage of human development. In the *Zerstreute Blätter* Herder also published a number of other articles on different aspects of Indian culture. In one of these, "Ueber Denkmale der Vorwelt," also from 1792,⁴⁵ he portrays Hinduism as a flower religion, and this description might well have influenced Hegel's account of it in the *Phenomenology*. Herder also adumbrates the Hindu divinities Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva in a way that is similar to Hegel's treatment in his lectures thirty years later.

Another important figure to be inspired by Forster's translation was Friedrich von Schlegel,⁴⁶ who was initially interested in the poetry of India, which he believed could inspire his contemporaries to create a much needed

J. Johnson 1803, vol. 2, pp. 30–9.) See Willson, *A Mythical Image*, pp. 49–71. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 41–50.

⁴³ See, for example, Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 40 (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 34).

⁴⁴ Johann Gottfried Herder, "Ueber ein morgenländisches Drama. Einige Briefe," *Zerstreute Blätter*, vol. 4, Gotha: Carl Wilhelm Ettinger 1792, pp. 263–312.

⁴⁵ Johann Gottfried Herder, "Ueber Denkmale der Vorwelt," *Zerstreute Blätter*, vol. 4, Gotha: Carl Wilhelm Ettinger 1792, pp. 185–262. See, for example, p. 228: "Nun sind viele ihrer Göttergeschichten so zart gedacht, ihre Mythologie ist so ganz eine Metaphysik des Blumen- und Pflanzlebens, daß man aus ihr die schönsten Abbildungen der Kunst hoffen müßte." Ibid., p. 232: "Die Indischen Musen und Nymphen endlich, Personificationen der unschuldigsten und schönsten Wesen der Natur, der Bäume, Pflanzen, Blumen, der Jahreszeiten, ja selbst der musikalischen Töne, sind beinahe die zarteste Sprosse einer menschlichen Dichtung." See also *ibid.*, p. 248. The possible importance of this text for Hegel has been suggested by Nicholas A. Germana in his *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 53–4.

⁴⁶ For Schlegel's interest in India and his influence on German Indology, see Willson, *A Mythical Image*, pp. 199–220. Viyagappa, *G.W.F. Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 43–5. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 98–130. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 68ff. Christopher Ryan, *Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Religion: The Death of God and the Oriental Renaissance*, Leuven: Peeters 2010, pp. 33–8. René Gérard, *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, Nancy: Georges Thomas 1963, pp. 84–128.

modern poetry. He was so captivated by this idea that he decided to take the bold step of trying to learn Sanskrit. To this end he moved to Paris in 1802 since there was no one in the German-speaking states who could teach him. Up until then the German scholars had access to this material only via English translations. In Paris Schlegel was determined to change this. He began with the study of Persian with the above-mentioned Antoine-Léonard de Chézy. In 1803 he began to study Sanskrit from the British army officer Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824), who learned the language in Calcutta and became a member of the Asiatick Society.⁴⁷ Hamilton was in Paris in 1803 examining the Sanskrit manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale,⁴⁸ and with him Schlegel made quick progress and was soon able to read texts in Sanskrit, which gave him a new, more profound insight into the culture of ancient India.

In 1808 Schlegel published the fruit of his research in *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Alterthumskunde*.⁴⁹ In addition to being influential in the field of linguistics, this work is often said to mark the beginning of the scholarly study of Indian language and culture in the Germanophone world. Moreover, it set off a wave of interest in India among the German Romantic writers. Hegel owned a copy of this work and clearly made a study of it.⁵⁰ The first section or Book One is dedicated to a treatment of the Sanskrit language. Drawing on the work of William Jones, who had established the connection between Sanskrit and the European languages,⁵¹ Schlegel sought in Sanskrit and India the earliest forms of language and culture. He argued (incorrectly) that Sanskrit was the *Ursprache* from which Greek, Latin, Persian, and the modern European languages all derived—research which Hegel comments upon.⁵² The notion that Sanskrit might possibly predate Hebrew was nothing less than heresy. Moreover, Schlegel's audience in the Germanophone world was astonished to hear that Sanskrit was related to German. Book Two treats the philosophy and religious beliefs of India. Schlegel provocatively claimed that India was the source

⁴⁷ See Rosane Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824): A Chapter in the Early History of Sanskrit Philology*, New Haven: The American Oriental Society 1968. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 67–78.

⁴⁸ The fruit of this was the cooperative work between Hamilton and Louis Mathieu Langlès entitled, *Catalogue des manuscrits samskrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale, Avec des notices du contenu de la plupart des ouvrages*, Paris: De l'Imprimerie bibliographique 1807.

⁴⁹ Friedrich von Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Alterthumskunde*, Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer 1808. (This work appears in Hegel's library as number 740.) See Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 122–30. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 72ff.

⁵⁰ See Hegel's *Library*, 740. See LPR, vol. 2, p. 360n; VPR, Part 2, p. 261n. LPR, vol. 2, p. 723; VPR, Part 2, p. 612. LPWHI, p. 178; VGH, p. 219.

⁵¹ See Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, p. 124. Hegel mentions this without referring explicitly to Schlegel. See LPWH, vol. 1, p. 114; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 191.

⁵² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 141f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 195.

of the Greek religion and not Egypt, as was often thought. But Schlegel was surprisingly critical of what he regards as superstitious elements in ancient Hinduism. He had difficulty finding anything in the ancient sources that could be interpreted as an early form of Christianity. Book Three is concerned with Indian history. Finally, in the last section Schlegel awakened the imagination of his readers by presenting his translations of selected ancient Indian texts, consisting of excerpts from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *The Laws of Manu*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata*. Schlegel's work was doubtless one of the most influential texts in the German-speaking world and, indeed, in all of Europe for creating interest in ancient Indian culture. Despite this, Schlegel more or less abandoned Sanskrit studies after this and converted to Catholicism.

Schelling in his classic treatise *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom* from 1809 refers to Schlegel's *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*. Here the key issue is the pantheism of the Hindu religion. The issue of pantheism had been the cause of a major controversy in connection with Lessing's claim to have been in agreement with Spinoza's pantheism. In his work Schlegel refers critically to the philosophy of identity (with which Schelling was associated) and connects it with oriental pantheism.⁵³ At the beginning of his treatise on human freedom, the young Schelling, presumably alarmed by being associated with pantheism, refers critically to Schlegel's statement.⁵⁴

Schlegel's book exerted a major influence on the philologist Franz Bopp (1791–1867),⁵⁵ who had traveled to Paris in 1812 at the encouragement of his teacher Karl Joseph Windischmann in Bonn. In Paris Bopp was a student of the famous French linguist and orientalist Antoine Isaac, Baron Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838), one of the founding members of the Société Asiatique.⁵⁶ Inspired by Friedrich von Schlegel's work, he attempted to put Schlegel's claims on a more solid scholarly footing. In 1816 he published his *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache*, the book regarded by many as the foundation of modern Indo-European linguistics.⁵⁷ This work also contained a long section of Sanskrit texts translated into German, including snippets from the *Vedas*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata*.

⁵³ Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, pp. 140–2.

⁵⁴ "Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freyheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände," in *F.W.J. Schelling's Schriften*, Erster Band, Landshut: Philipp Krüll 1809, p. 402n (see also p. 422n). (English translation: *Of Human Freedom*, trans. by James Gutmann, Chicago: Open Court 1936, p. 10n (see also p. 26n).)

⁵⁵ See Gérard, *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, pp. 154–60.

⁵⁶ See Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, p. 146. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 65, p. 78, pp. 177ff., pp. 295–8.

⁵⁷ Franz Bopp, *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache*, ed. by K.J. Windischmann, Frankfurt am Main: in der Andreäischen Buchhandlung 1816.

In 1817 Bopp met Alexander Hamilton in Paris, and Hamilton became a kind of benefactor for the young scholar.⁵⁸ With Hegel's assistance, Bopp, in 1821, received the chair of Sanskrit Studies in Berlin.⁵⁹ Hegel was clearly very familiar with Bopp's work and owned a number of his books.⁶⁰ In one passage he refers to him as his "scholarly friend and colleague."⁶¹

Another person to be captivated by *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* was August Wilhelm von Schlegel,⁶² who, like his younger brother a decade earlier, learned Sanskrit in Paris, where he met Bopp in 1813. In 1818 A.W. Schlegel was appointed to the new professorship at the University of Bonn. Although his position was not in Indology, he was active in the promotion of the new field.⁶³ He published the journal *Indische Bibliothek*, which saw three issues from 1823–30. The stated goal of this journal, of which Hegel owned a copy,⁶⁴ was to disseminate information about the literature and culture of India. Schlegel produced editions of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (1823) and the *Ramayana* (1829).⁶⁵ In the former Schlegel presents the original text in Sanskrit, followed by a commentary and finally by a Latin translation, which Hegel made use of.⁶⁶ The latter presents the Sanskrit text of the first two books of the *Ramayana* with no translation or commentary. With the two academic

⁵⁸ See Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824)*, pp. 112–14.

⁵⁹ See Max Lenz, *Geschichte der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, vols 1–4, Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses 1910–18, vol. 2.1, pp. 281–6. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 181–6.

⁶⁰ In his library, Hegel owned the following works: Franz Bopp, *Vergleichende Zergliederung des Sanskrits und der mit ihm verwandten Sprachen*, Berlin: Gedruckt in der Druckerei der Königl. Akademie 1824 (*Hegel's Library*, 610). Franz Bopp, *Ardschuna's Reise zu Indra's Himmel, nebst anderen Episoden des Maha-bharata*, Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften 1824 (*Hegel's Library*, 611). *Die Sündflut: nebst drei anderen der wichtigsten Episoden des Mahâ-Bhârata*, trans. by Franz Bopp, Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler 1829 (*Hegel's Library*, 647). See also Bopp's Sanskrit edition with his Latin translation, *Nalus, Carmen Sanscritum e Mahâbhârato*, London, Paris, Strasbourg: Treuttel et Würtz 1819. See Viyagappa, G.W.F. *Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 57–9. See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 344; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 247.

⁶¹ Hegel, *Episode*, p. 83n; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 97n.

⁶² See Gérard, *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, pp. 129–48. Viyagappa, G.W.F. *Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 51–4.

⁶³ It should be noted, however, that Schlegel's position was not a *Lehrstuhl* for Sanskrit Studies but rather for art history, archeology and Roman history. See Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, p. 182.

⁶⁴ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Indische Bibliothek*, vol. 2, 4tes Heft, Bonn: Weber 1827 (vol. 1, 1820–3; vol. 2, 1824–7; vol. 3, 1830) (*Hegel's Library*, 742).

⁶⁵ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Bhagavad-Gita, id est ΘΕΣΤΗΕΣΙΟΝ ΜΕΛΟΣ, sive Almi Krishnae et Arjunae Colloquium de rebus divinis Bharatae Episodium*, Bonn: Weber 1823. August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Ramayana, id est Carmen epicum de Ramae rebus gestis poetae antiquissimi Valmici Opus*, vol. 1, Part 1, Bonn: Typis regis sumtibus editoris 1829 (*Hegel's Library*, 741). Volume 1, Part 2 and Volume 2, Part 1 of this work appeared in 1838.) See Herling, *The German Gita*, pp. 157–201.

⁶⁶ See *Phil. of Mind*, § 573, pp. 305f.; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 463. *Episode*, p. 11; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 61. *Episode*, p. 17; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 64. *Episode*, pp. 119f.; *Jub.*, vol. 20, pp. 115f.

positions of Schlegel and Bopp (in 1818 and 1821 respectively), the field of Indology was inaugurated in the Germanophone world. (By contrast, the first chair for Sanskrit studies in Britain was only created in 1833.)

Hegel's great critic, Arthur Schopenhauer, made extensive and sympathetic use of Indian philosophy and religion in his work.⁶⁷ In Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, the first volume of which appeared in 1819, he refers frequently to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Upanishads*, the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, and *The Laws of Manu* as well as the journal *Asiatick Researches*.⁶⁸ His appreciation for this material borders on zealotry. Schopenhauer was rather creative in his use of Indian thought, seizing on key themes such as suffering, the illusion of existence, and the will. He also makes use of key tenets of Hinduism as a way to criticize the Judeo-Christian tradition. He actively sought to incorporate concepts and elements from Indian philosophy and religion into his own philosophical system. Schopenhauer became Hegel's colleague in Berlin in 1820, and thus Hegel could hardly have helped knowing something about his work and the importance of India for it.⁶⁹

The scholar and Prussian diplomat, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) was sent to England as the Prussian Ambassador in 1817, and there he learned about the British research on Indian literature and culture. While in London, he met Bopp, who shared his enthusiasm. There he also made the acquaintance of the above-mentioned British orientalist Charles Wilkins. Humboldt passionately pursued his interest when he retired from the Prussian civil service at the end of 1819. He studied Sanskrit at first alone and then later with Bopp in Berlin. It was due to his considerable political influence that the professorship in Sanskrit studies was established and that it went to Bopp.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 427–34. Douglas L. Berger, "The Veil of Maya": Schopenhauer's System and Early Indian Thought, Binghamton, NY: Global Academic Publishing 2004. Ryan, *Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Religion*. Heinz Bechert, "Flucht in den Orient?" *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch*, vol. 62, 1981, pp. 55–65. Wilhelm Halbfass, "Schopenhauer im Gespräch mit der Indischen Tradition," in *Schopenhauer im Denken der Gegenwart*, ed. by Volker Spierling, Munich and Zürich: Piper Verlag 1987, pp. 55–71. Glasenapp, *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker*, pp. 68–101. Arthur Hübscher, "Schopenhauer und die Religionen Asiens," *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch*, vol. 60, 1979, pp. 1–16. Susanne Sommerfeld, *Indienschau und Indien-deutung romantischer Philosophen*, Zürich: Rascher Verlag 1943, pp. 91–106. Gérard, "Schopenhauer," in his *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, pp. 215–51. *Schopenhauer and Indian Philosophy: A Dialogue Between India and Germany*, ed. by Arati Barua, New Delhi: Northern Book Centre 2008.

⁶⁸ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus 1819.

⁶⁹ Officially Schopenhauer was affiliated with the university in Berlin from 1820 until 1832. However, he was apparently rarely present. His courses were poorly attended, and he was frequently away on trips. See Lenz, *Geschichte der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, vol. 2.1, p. 305.

⁷⁰ See McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 87f., pp. 92ff. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 2–3. Willson, *A Mythical Image*, pp. 2–3, pp. 173–86. Gérard, *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, pp. 149–54.

Humboldt was interested in the role that Sanskrit could play in a theory of language. Specifically, he was, like so many others, fascinated to discover that Sanskrit belonged to the family of Indo-European languages. He too wished to claim that it was the origin of the later languages such as Greek and Latin. In 1823 he published the first part of an article on Sanskrit in A.W. Schlegel's *Indische Bibliothek*.⁷¹

Humboldt was also interested in the religion and philosophy of ancient India, and this led to his fascination with the *Bhagavad-Gita*.⁷² He was deeply moved to be able to read A.W. Schlegel's edition in the original in 1823. Over the next few years he wrote up his reflections on this text and presented his results in the form of two lectures given at the Prussian Academy of Science in 1825 and 1826 and published soon thereafter.⁷³ Humboldt was highly laudatory about the merits and value of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which he took to be a philosophical system. He was particularly captivated by what he regarded as the ethical dimension of the work, which he saw as having direct practical application to life.

At this time Hegel was revising the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* for the much expanded second edition that appeared in 1827. Inspired by Humboldt's work, he added a long section to the final chapter, in which he discusses the issue of pantheism in Western philosophy and Hinduism.⁷⁴ Then in 1827, in two separate articles in the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, Hegel published his review of Humboldt's book on the *Bhagavad-Gita*.⁷⁵ While expressing his gratitude to Humboldt for making people aware of this important text, Hegel is critical of Indian religion and culture, which he believes cannot begin to be compared with that of the

⁷¹ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Ueber die in der Sanskrit-Sprache durch die Suffixa *vā* und *ja* gebildeten Verbalformen," *Indische Bibliothek. Eine Zeitschrift*, ed. by August Wilhelm von Schlegel, Bonn: Eduard Weber, vol. 1, 1823, pp. 433–67. This article is continued in *Indische Bibliothek. Eine Zeitschrift*, vol. 2, 1827, pp. 72–134.

⁷² See Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 194–201.

⁷³ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gītā bekannte Episode des Mahā-Bhārata*, Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften 1826 (*Hegel's Library*, 614). See Viyagappa, *G.W.F. Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 45–50. Herling, *The German Gita*, pp. 203–20.

⁷⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 573; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 458–74. See Herbert Herring, "Introduction" in *On the Episode of the Mahabharata Known by the Name Bhagavad-Gita by Wilhelm von Humboldt*, trans. by Herbert Herring, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research 1995, p. xv.

⁷⁵ Hegel, "Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gita bekannte Episode des Mahabharata. Von Wilhelm von Humboldt. Berlin, 1826," *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, 1827, Erster Artikel (January), nos. 7–8, pp. 51–63; Zweiter Artikel (October 1827), nos. 181–8, pp. 1441–92. (English translation: *On the Episode of the Mahabharata Known by the Name Bhagavad-Gita by Wilhelm von Humboldt*, trans. by Herbert Herring, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research 1995.) *Jub.*, vol. 20, pp. 57–131. See the commentary to this work in Michel Hulin, *Hegel et l'orient, suivi de la traduction annotée d'un essai de Hegel sur la Bhagavad-Gita*, Paris: J. Vrin 1979, pp. 207–16. See also Herling, *The German Gita*, pp. 220–53.

Greeks. He challenges Humboldt's claim that the *Bhagavad-Gita* represents a kind of philosophy, which, to his mind, only began, properly speaking, with the Greek world. In the wider debate, there can be no doubt that Hegel comes down on the side of the Hellenists, although this is not to say that he believed that people should not pursue Sanskrit studies or that the university had no need for this field.

The question about the importance of Indian culture was a sensitive one at the time. As noted, much of the original interest began in the fledgling field of comparative linguistics. It was controversial to claim that Sanskrit was older than Greek and that the latter was derived in part from the former. Views of this sort were regarded as a threat to the traditional fields of Greek and Latin philology.⁷⁶ The conservative proponents of these fields condescendingly ridiculed the new Indologists as dilettantes. When Hegel's colleague Bopp attempted to establish comparative philology at the university in Berlin, he met with strong resistance.

An important figure, who until 1808 belonged to the group of Heidelberg Romantics, was Görres.⁷⁷ He believed that India was the cradle of culture.⁷⁸ In his *Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt* from 1810, Görres made a detailed study of the myths of, among others, the Babylonians, Persians, and Egyptians.⁷⁹ He argues that the origin of all these mythological traditions is to be found in India. Görres attempts to demonstrate, for example, that the phallic cult associated with the worship of the god Shiva can be found in modified form in many other mythical traditions, such as the Greek worship of Dionysius.⁸⁰ The myths of ancient India had been spread throughout the world, Görres argues, by means of a long series of migrations of peoples. This was an affront to the classicists and the Francophiles since it reduced Greek and Roman culture to something secondary and derivative. Görres was a political activist, and a part of his agenda, like that of Friedrich von Schlegel and the brothers Grimm, was to cultivate a sense of German nationalism by drawing attention to German folk tales and folk songs.⁸¹ It was in such elements

⁷⁶ See McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, pp. 96ff.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1, section 1.5.

⁷⁸ See Willson, *A Mythical Image*, pp. 106–10. Jon Vanden Heuvel, *A German Life in the Age of Revolution: Joseph Görres, 1778–1848*, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press 2001, especially pp. 133–49. Germana, *The Orient of Europe*, pp. 147–59. Gérard, *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemande*, pp. 181–7.

⁷⁹ Johann Joseph von Görres, *Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt*, vols 1–2, Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer 1810.

⁸⁰ Hegel takes the side of Görres and Creuzer on this issue. See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 334; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 236f.: "The cult of Mahadeva in particular is very extensive, the cult of the vital force, this obscene cult whose symbol stands erect in most Hindu temples. . . . This cult of the power of procreation and its symbol is the phallus cult, which has persisted in India, Egypt, and Greece." See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 592; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 487.

⁸¹ Johann Joseph von Görres, *Die deutschen Volksbücher*, Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer 1807.

of the national cultural heritage that, they believed, the true spirit of the people could be found. By pointing to the importance of India, Görres could create a genealogy for German culture that seemed superior to French classicism. This played an important role in the formation of German nationalism at the time of the French occupation of the German states.

A key figure was Görres' friend in Heidelberg, the above-mentioned Friedrich Creuzer,⁸² who, in his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*,⁸³ followed in the footsteps of Friedrich von Schlegel and applied the same kind of argument to the field of religion, claiming that the religion of ancient India was prior to and a source of that of the Greeks. Just as Bopp had compared different languages in order to determine their relation to one another, Creuzer compared the different religions. As a result of his investigation, he claimed that in Indian mythology one could find the forerunners of many of the well-known Greek myths and legends.

Creuzer's *Symbolik* has as its main goal to determine the origins of the Greek religion in the mythologies of other ancient peoples. Thus while his primary focus is ostensibly the Greeks, in fact, his investigation leads him to explore many other religions. According to Creuzer, the Greek gods were obvious personifications, who had lively personalities and characters. By contrast, the Indian gods are merely symbols of natural forces and should not be conceived as personalities: Brahmā is creation, Vishnu preservation, and Shiva destruction. This represents an older stage of religious development, that is, symbolism. Creuzer further advanced Görres' claims about the cult of Shiva being the origin of the Greek cult of Dionysius and the Eleusinian Mysteries. The emphasis on the passionate and the erotic at the heart of myth was too much for the traditional classicists to countenance. As noted, Creuzer's controversial views were the object of much critical discussion at the time.

5.2. HEGEL'S SOURCES

Hegel was familiar with most all of the work going on in Europe in the new field of Indology and Sanskrit studies just outlined.⁸⁴ With regard to primary

⁸² See Chapter 1, section 1.5. For Görres' relation to Creuzer, see Wolfgang Bopp, *Görres und der Mythos*, Tübingen: Dissertation, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen 1974, pp. 176–92.

⁸³ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1810–12. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, 2nd fully revised edition, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819–21.

⁸⁴ For Hegel's sources see the "Editorial Introduction" in *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 6–7, pp. 15–17, pp. 38–40, pp. 62–3, pp. 76–7. See also the bibliography in Rathore and Mohapatra, *Hegel's India: A Reinterpretation, with Texts*, pp. 273–83.

material, Hegel knew the religious texts the *Vedas* (the sacred texts of the Hindus) and the *Puranas* (which includes a theogony, a history of the universe, numerous genealogies, etc.).⁸⁵ He also studied the legal text, *The Laws of Manu*, which he apparently read in the translation of William Jones.⁸⁶ However, he presumably also read the translated extract on Indian cosmology from *The Laws of Manu* in Friedrich von Schlegel's *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*.⁸⁷ Hegel was familiar with at least some of the episodes in the epic poems the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (of which the *Bhagavad-Gita* is the most famous part).⁸⁸ For the former, Hegel owned a copy of August Wilhelm von Schlegel's *Ramayana Carmen*, but since this was only published in 1829, he clearly had another source that he used for his lectures prior to this.⁸⁹ He had access to extracts of this work in Schlegel's *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*.⁹⁰ For the *Mahabharata* he was presumably using the excerpts translated by Bopp.⁹¹ He was obviously familiar with the *Bhagavad-Gita* through the work of Wilhelm von Humboldt, although he could also read

⁸⁵ For the *Vedas* see LPR, vol. 2, p. 329; VPR, Part 2, p. 232. LPR, vol. 2, p. 331; VPR, Part 2, p. 233. LPR, vol. 2, p. 334; VPR, Part 2, p. 236. LPR, vol. 2, p. 589; VPR, Part 2, p. 484. LPR, vol. 2, p. 592; VPR, Part 2, p. 488. LPR, vol. 2, p. 735; VPR, Part 2, p. 622. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 150; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 206. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 151; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 206. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 159; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 217 (Colebrooke's translation). LPWH, vol. 1, p. 273; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 193. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 285; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 209. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 293; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 220. For the *Puranas* see *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 17; *Jub.*, vol. 15, p. 370. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 160; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 218. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 290; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 216.

⁸⁶ *Institutes of Hindu Law; or The Ordinances of Menu, According to the Gloss of Cullúca, Comprising the Indian System of Duties Religious and Civil*, trans. by William Jones, Calcutta: Printed by the Order of Government 1794. (LPR, vol. 2, p. 333; VPR, Part 2, p. 236. LPR, vol. 2, p. 346; VPR, Part 2, p. 249. LPR, vol. 2, p. 589; VPR, Part 2, p. 484. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 151; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 206. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 152; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 208. *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 153f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 210. *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 154f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 211. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 160; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 218 (translated by William Jones). LPWH, vol. 1, p. 262; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 180. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 263; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 181. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 263; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 182f. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 267; VPWG, vol. 1, pp. 185f. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 273; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 193. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 278; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 200. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 282; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 206.)

⁸⁷ Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, pp. 272–83 (*Hegel's Library*, 740).

⁸⁸ For the *Ramayana* see LPR, vol. 2, p. 597; VPR, Part 2, p. 492. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 263; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 180. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 275; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 195. LPWH, vol. 1, p. 284; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 209. For the *Mahabharata*, see LPR, vol. 2, p. 603; VPR, Part 2, p. 498. LPWH, vol. 1, pp. 270f.; VPWG, vol. 1, p. 190. He refers to both works several times in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

⁸⁹ August Wilhelm von Schlegel, *Ramayana Carmen*, Erster Theil, Erste Abtheilung, Bonn: Typis regis sumtibus editoris 1829 (*Hegel's Library*, 741). See *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 160; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 217.

⁹⁰ Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, pp. 231–71.

⁹¹ Franz Bopp, *Ardschuna's Reise zu Indra's Himmel: nebst anderen Episoden des Mahabharata*, Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften 1824 (*Hegel's Library*, 611). Franz Bopp, *Die Sündflut: nebst drei anderen der wichtigsten Episoden des Mahâ-Bhârata*, trans. by Franz Bopp, Berlin: Gedruckt in der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften . . . Bei Ferdinand Dümmler 1829 (*Hegel's Library*, 647). See LPR, vol. 2, p. 344; VPR, Part 2, p. 247 (here Hegel refers to Bopp's translation). *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 151; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 207. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 160; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 217.

a partial translation in Schlegel's *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*.⁹² He also refers to the English edition by Charles Wilkins.⁹³

With respect to secondary material, Hegel owned several works on Indian literature, history, and the Sanskrit language. He was familiar with the two-volume *History of Hindostan* by the Scottish orientalist Alexander Dow (1735–79).⁹⁴ This work provides a broad and detailed overview of the history of the Hindus from the earliest times. Hegel also owned a copy of *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India*, the work of the Scottish historian William Robertson (1721–93),⁹⁵ who outlines the commercial and cultural contact with India that the Greeks, Romans, and later the Muslims had. Robertson gives a sympathetic portrayal of Hinduism, which he tries to defend, while criticizing the Christian missionaries.

Hegel refers to the book by the French missionary Jean Antoine Dubois (1765–1848), *Moeurs, institutions et cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde* from 1825.⁹⁶ Dubois lived in India for many years and attempted to dress and comport himself as much like a Hindu as possible. Part One of the work is dedicated to Indian society and the caste system. Part Two explains the four states of Brahminical life. Of particular relevance is Part Three, which gives an overview of the Hindu religious beliefs and practices. Here Dubois discusses in detail the doctrine of the Trimurti, which plays an important role in Hegel's analysis.⁹⁷ He also gives an account of the many different gods of Hinduism.⁹⁸ Also of interest to Hegel was presumably the explanation of the different animal cults.⁹⁹

Hegel further refers to a lesser-known work entitled *Glauben, Wissen und Kunst der alten Hindus*, penned by Nikolaus Müller (1770–1851), an artist and writer from Mainz.¹⁰⁰ In the wake of the French Revolution, Müller became a

⁹² Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, pp. 284–307.

⁹³ *The Bhagvat-Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon; in Eighteen Lectures; with Notes. Translated from the Original, in the Sanskreet, or Ancient Language of the Brahmans*, by Charles Wilkins, Senior Merchant in the service of the Honorable The East India Company, on their Bengal Establishment, London: C. Nourse 1785. (*Episode*, p. 9; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 60. *Episode*, p. 11; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 61.)

⁹⁴ Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan; From the Earliest Account of Time, to the Death of Akbar; Translated from the Persian of Mahummud Casim Ferishta of Delhi: Together with a Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmans*, vols 1–2, London: T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt 1768. (LPR, vol. 2, p. 331; VPR, Part 2, p. 233.)

⁹⁵ William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India; and the Progress of Trade with that Country prior to the Discovery of the Passage to it by the Cape of Good Hope*, Basil: J.J. Tourneisen 1792 (*Hegel's Library*, 1107).

⁹⁶ Abbé Jean Antoine Dubois, *Moeurs, institutions et cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde*, vols 1–2, [Paris]: L'Imprimerie Royale 1825.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 289–308.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 395–428.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 429–45.

¹⁰⁰ Niklas Müller, *Glauben, Wissen und Kunst der alten Hindus in ursprünglicher Gestalt und im Gewande der Symbolik mit vergleichenden Seitenblicken auf Symbolmythe der berühmteren Völker der alten Welt, mit hierher gehöriger Literatur und Linguistik*, Erster Band, Mainz: Florian

convinced Jacobin and went to Paris in 1793, where he studied art with Jacques-Louis David. He left Paris, disillusioned, after the Reign of Terror. Reading Herder and Creuzer, he cultivated a long-term interest in Indian poetry and mythology, which culminated in the mentioned book. This work makes a defense of Hinduism and Orientalism in general against the criticisms issued by the neohellenists. It is a highly learned text that makes use of the primary sources, which are quoted extensively.

Hegel was clearly aware of the Romantics' interest in ancient India and showed some understanding for their enthusiasm. He explains at the beginning of his account in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* that India "has always been the land of imaginative aspiration and appears to us still as a fairy region, an enchanted world."¹⁰¹ But he is sober in his assessment. While he believes that there is much that is beautiful and interesting in the culture of ancient India, there is no reason to put it up on a pedestal. With an allusion to Friedrich Schlegel's influential book, he explains:

a more accurate acquaintance with its real value has not a little diminished the widely acclaimed fame of Indian wisdom. . . . In the enthusiasm of discovery the Hindu culture was highly rated; and as, when new beauties are discovered, the old ones are commonly looked down upon with contempt, Hindu poetry and philosophy were extolled as far superior to the Greek.¹⁰²

While Hegel understands the excitement surrounding the discovery of a new culture, he clearly believes that its value has been exaggerated.

Hegel's general view of historical development naturally made him critical of the Romantics' positive conception of ancient India. For the Romantics, the focus was on recovering an idyllic, pristine past, which has since become corrupted. For Hegel, by contrast, the past is always simply a stepping stone to the future and to the *telos* of historical development. Thus, while past periods have their importance and justification, the ultimate focus is on the end of the historical development and not the beginning. Despite the Romantics' attempt to glorify the past, there were, in Hegel's eyes, many nefarious aspects of ancient India, for example, the caste system, which stood in the way of the development of the individual and human freedom. While the Romantics saw in ancient India a model for cultural regeneration that would help the modern world regain a lost sense of freedom and authenticity, Hegel believed that this was naïvely misguided. The development of freedom is a long and difficult path that humanity must follow and win step-for-step through the course of history. Thus it does not make sense to wish to return to an earlier

Kupferberg 1822. (*Letters*, p. 495; *Briefe*, vol. 4.2, letter 406a, p. 42. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 286; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 211f.)

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 139; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 191.

¹⁰² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 159; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 216f.

period where this freedom was only beginning to develop. In short, for Hegel, ancient India was not a model to emulate.

Hegel's treatment of Hinduism is one of the places in his *corpus* where his Eurocentrism or indeed racism comes out most strongly. Perhaps he has inherited a disdain of the Indians from the British texts that were among his main sources of information. At the time the European colonization of Asia was in full swing, and his criticism of the Indians can be read implicitly as an indirect justification for this movement. While there have been suspicions of a purported pro-colonial agenda on Hegel's part, in fact in both Germany and France there was a considerable amount of sympathy for India and resentment of the conquering British.¹⁰³ One need only think of the positive treatment by Schopenhauer to appreciate that not everyone in Europe at the time was a colonial ideologue.

The task of assessing Hegel's view of Hinduism is not easy since he characterizes the nature of the Hindu religion in a quite reproving manner. As noted, he designates Hinduism the "Religion of Fantasy" or "of Imagination." The idea is that the Hindus have a ruleless and absurd fantasy that wants to see a god everywhere. Similarly, he complains that for Hinduism "differentiation and manifoldness are abandoned to the wildest externality of fantasy."¹⁰⁴ Given this, any analysis of Hegel's interpretation of Hinduism must attempt to understand his philosophical views, while at the same time coming to terms with his racism and Eurocentrism.

5.3. THE UNIVERSAL AND THE PARTICULAR: BRĀHMA

According to Hegel, the Hindus have an abstract concept of the divine, which has both a universal and a particular side. With regard to the former it is conceived as an overarching principle, as the creative power of the universe, that encompasses everything. This is what is known as "Brāhma," which is the analogue to Tian in the Chinese religion. Hegel describes this as follows:

The first element in the concept, the element of genuineness, is this universal substance, as we have seen—the eternal rest of self-containment, this essence that has its being within itself, which is the universal substance. As the universal, this substance is likewise the power that has being in itself. But it is not turned against

¹⁰³ See Schulin, "Indien" in his *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*, pp. 76f.

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 580n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 476n. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 334–5; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 449.

something else, like appetite, but is still and invisible, being reflected into itself—and for that reason determined simply as power.¹⁰⁵

Brāhma is a force existing on its own. It is the totality of nature or can be conceived as the laws of nature. It is this conception of the divine that led to the association of Hinduism with pantheism. Hegel underscores that this abstract conception of god should not be conceived as a self-conscious entity, and this is what is meant by referring to it as “substance” and not subject.

Thus the highest conception of the divine is Brāhma, but this conception has no qualities or determinations since it is wholly abstract. Hegel explains in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, “One extreme in the Indian mind is the consciousness of the absolute as what in itself is purely universal, undifferentiated, and therefore completely indeterminate.”¹⁰⁶ Brāhma is thus not an object of sense. It is a formless entity operating invisibly behind the scenes.¹⁰⁷ Hegel critically associates this conception with the Deist view of God as the Supreme Being, about which nothing more can be known.¹⁰⁸ In both cases Hegel is critical of abstraction, which, he believes, deprives the divine of any meaningful content. This represents the universal side of Brāhma.

But it also has a particular side. Although Brāhma is in itself abstract and formless, it is nonetheless the power that constitutes the basis for everything that exists in the world. This represents the creative aspect of the power of Brāhma. Everything in the universe comes from Brāhma. There thus arises a distinction between Brāhma, the single, unified deity, and the multitude of creation for which Brāhma is responsible. While Brāhma as such is never directly an object of sense perception, its incarnations as individual entities are. The world of actuality that we perceive around us is full of these incarnations. For Hegel, this represents a problematic point in Hinduism. Since Brāhma is abstract and has no determination or content as an object of thought, its incarnations can be absolutely anything at all. Brāhma can be incarnated in any object of nature, and thus most everything becomes a potential incarnation. The indeterminacy of Brāhma means that no specific incarnations can be ruled out.

¹⁰⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 325; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 228. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 732; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 620.

¹⁰⁶ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 335; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 448. See also *Episode*, pp. 117f.; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 114.

¹⁰⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 335; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 448: “Since this extreme abstraction has no particular content and is not visualized as a concrete personality, it affords in no respect a material which intuition could shape in some way or other.”

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, *Episode*, p. 119; *Jub.*, vol. 20, pp. 114f.: “When we Europeans call God the most supreme Being, this definition is equally abstract and insufficient, and reason-based metaphysics which denies our knowledge of God, i.e., to know God’s qualities, demands that our conception of God be restricted to the same abstraction, knowing nothing of God than what is Brāhma.”

This analysis recalls Hegel's section "Force and the Understanding" from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹⁰⁹ There he explored the conception of an object as an invisible force that was perceived only by its expressions or appearances in the empirical world. In that account Hegel examined the contradictions involved in this object model. At first, the truth or essence is thought to lie in the unseen force operating behind the scenes; its appearances are only conceived to be what is accidental or inessential. But then the realization is made that it is only through the appearances that one has access to the unseen force, and thus the only way to know it is by means of these appearances. With this the situation is suddenly turned around, and the appearances become the essential thing. Thus the analysis shifts back and forth between placing the truth on the side of the force or on the side of the appearances. The same dynamic can be perceived here in Hegel's analysis of Brāhma, where there is a focus at first on the truth and unity of the power behind the world of appearances, but this appears wholly abstract and lacking in content and reality. Thus the focus moves to the incarnations or expressions of Brāhma in the real world, which, by virtue of their appearance in reality, are concrete and have content. In both analyses the respective conceptions (of the object or of the divine) exist in the dialectical tension of, on the one hand, a unified unseen force which has a multitude of appearances and, on the other, this plurality of appearances. For Hinduism, the different appearances or incarnations of Brāhma can also be conceived as existing independently. The key for Hegel here is that there is no necessary relation between the universal and the particular, and thus the incarnations are arbitrary. This is a result of the fact that the initial conception of the divine is completely abstract and devoid of any content. Since it has no content, it is indeterminate. Thus it cannot determine any specific incarnation, and therefore absolutely anything could then in principle be an incarnation of it.

5.4. THE TRIMURTI: BRAHMĀ, VISHNU, AND SHIVA

Brāhma has three main incarnations: Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva. Each of these has its own sphere of activity and characteristics. In this sense they can be conceived as separate and independent of one another. But they can also be conceived as joined together in a single deity. They collectively represent the group of the three main Hindu gods called the Trimurti.¹¹⁰ Hegel introduces this conception as follows:

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 79–103; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 108–38.

¹¹⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 327; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 230. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 587; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 483. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 734; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 622. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 278; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 199f.

Brāhma (neuter) is the supreme in religion, but there are besides chief divinities *Brahmā* (masc.), *Vishnu* or *Krishna*—incarnate in infinitely diverse forms—and *Shiva*. These form a connected Trinity. *Brahmā* is the highest; but *Vishnu* or *Krishna*, *Shiva*, the sun moreover, the air, etc., are also *Brahm*, i.e., substantial unity. To *Brahm* itself no sacrifices are offered; it is not honored; but prayers are presented to all other idols. *Brahm* itself is the substantial unity of all.¹¹¹

The deity *Brāhma* (or *Brahm*) is thus the ultimate power, standing above all the others. This is the deity that is abstracted from the world. By contrast, the three incarnations are all in their own way limited since they represent specific areas of existence. Moreover, since they appear in actuality, they are not abstract like *Brāhma*.

The three gods, *Brahmā*, *Vishnu*, and *Shiva* exist together as a single entity since they are all incarnations of *Brāhma*. When these three are represented as one, they are portrayed as a man with three heads and four arms. Hegel refers to images of this sort.¹¹² But these three deities also exist separately and independently of one another. He explains, "The distinctions presented are finally grasped as unity, as the Trimurti; and the Trimurti, not *Brahmā* itself, is grasped as the highest. But equally each person of the triad is also in turn taken alone, by itself, so that it is the totality, is the entire god."¹¹³ There thus appears a dialectical relation between the unity and the plurality in the divine.

The first of these deities is *Brahmā*. Hegel emphasizes the important distinction between *Brāhma*, that is, the highest, most abstract form of the divinity, and *Brahmā*, the incarnation of this deity in the Trimurti. While the former is an impersonal force, as is indicated by the fact that it is a neuter noun in Sanskrit (with the accent on the first vowel), the latter is a personified entity and is a masculine noun (with the accent on the last vowel).¹¹⁴ *Brahmā* is represented as a man having four heads for reading the four *Vedas* (see Fig. 5.1). He represents the principle of creation. Hegel is also aware of visual representations of this deity.¹¹⁵

The second divinity of the Trimurti is *Vishnu*.¹¹⁶ In contrast to the notion of creation, this incarnation represents maintenance. After the universe has been

¹¹¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 148; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 203. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 342; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 457.

¹¹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 734; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 622: "The Trimurti is also portrayed with three heads." See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 592, note 222; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 487, note 671.

¹¹³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 592; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 488.

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 586; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 481. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 342; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 457.

¹¹⁵ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 342; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 457: "Now his shape in detail has much that is symbolical; he is portrayed with four heads and four hands, with scepter, ring, etc. In color he is red, which hints at the sun, because these gods always at the same time bear universal natural significances which they personify."

¹¹⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 327f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 230. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 589f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 486.



Fig. 5.1. Depiction of Brahmā in William Jones' "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India," *Asiatick Researches*, vol. 1, 1788 (unnumbered page after p. 242).

created, it is Vishnu who is "the determinate being of preservation."¹¹⁷ Vishnu is worshipped both as himself and in the form of one of his avatars, of which there are ten in all. One of these avatars is Krishna, the young prince in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Another is Rama, whose life is the subject of the *Ramayana*.

The third divinity of the Trimurti is Shiva (see the Trimurti in Fig. 5.2).¹¹⁸ Shiva represents the principle of transformation or destruction. Hegel explains, "this is [the moment of] change in general; the basic character is on the one hand the vast energy of life, and on the other the destroyer, the devastator, the wild energy of natural life."¹¹⁹ Shiva is thus represented as an ox and in the form of a lingam.

¹¹⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 589; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 486. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 342; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 457.

¹¹⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 328; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 230f. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 591f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 487.

¹¹⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 591; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 487. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 342; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 457.

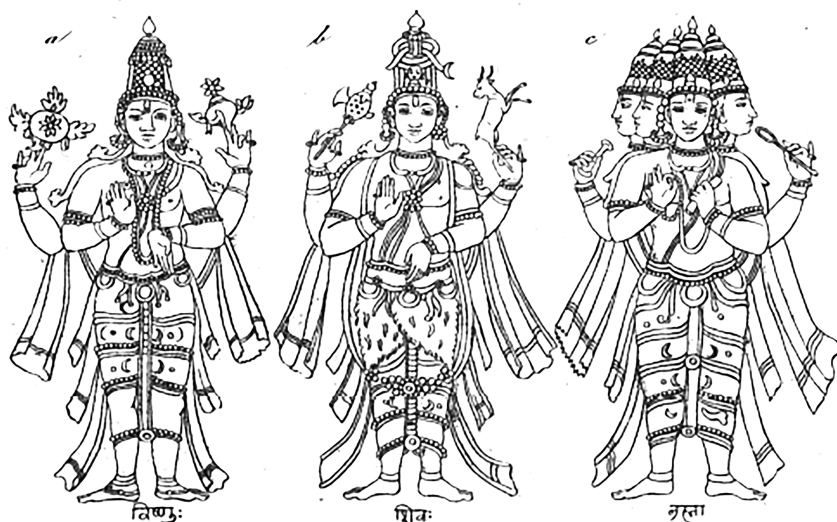


Fig. 5.2. Depiction of the Trimurti in *Abbildungen zu Friedrich Creuzers Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker. Auf sechzig Tafeln*, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819, Plate XXI.

Hegel recounts a Hindu legend of how each of the three gods in turn creates a part of the universe.¹²⁰ This legend is instructive for understanding the relations between these deities. Each of them goes about the work of creation in his own way, and the result is that what they create has a specific defect that is characteristic of the one-sidedness of the deity who created it. Thus *Brahmā* creates the universe, but there is nothing to preserve it, and so *Vishnu* is needed. *Vishnu* is enjoined to create human beings, but the people he makes “were idiots with great bellies and with no knowledge, like the beasts in the field; they had no passions and no will but to satisfy their carnal appetites.”¹²¹ Thus *Vishnu*, the principle of preservation or maintenance created human beings who were primarily characterized by their ability to sustain themselves and reproduce; they could survive but nothing more. Thus they looked like animals and not humans. They lacked any “mutable, destructive quality” and had “no transient nature” since these are just the opposite of *Vishnu*’s principle.¹²² So finally *Rudra*, an incarnation of *Shiva*, is

¹²⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 331–3; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 233–6. Hegel notes that he has read this story in Alexander Dow’s partial translation of the *Vedas* found in his *The History of Hindostan; From the Earliest Account of Time, to the Death of Akbar*; Translated from the Persian of Mahummud Casim Ferishta of Delhi: Together with a Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmins, vols 1–2, London: T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt 1768, see vol. 1, pp. xxxviii and following.

¹²¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 332; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 235.

¹²² *Ibid.*

enjoined to create human beings. He does so according to his principle, destruction, with the result that the people “were fiercer than tigers, having nothing but the destructive quality in their compositions.”¹²³ His human beings end up destroying one another since they lack the principle of Vishnu, preservation. For Hegel, the point of this story is that these three deities, although all thought to be incarnations of Brāhma, act individually. But their actions are all in some way incomplete since they reflect only their own individual characteristics. Thus they are obliged to work together, and only when they do so are they able to create human beings with the correct balance of qualities.

The Trimurti represents in a sense the Hindu trinity. It might appear at first glance that with this concept Hinduism would find favor with Hegel due both to his proclivity towards triadic structures and to the central role that he ascribes the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The analogy to the Christian Trinity had been noted by other thinkers, such as Kant, who mentions this in his lectures.¹²⁴ But, for Hegel, this analogy is misleading. His criticism of this conception of the trinity is that it is not speculative or dialectical.¹²⁵ According to Hegel, the three figures of the Trimurti have no necessary relation to one another (as in the Christian Trinity). He explains:

This third moment, if it wanted to be spirit, and to have the dignity of the Christian Trinity, would have to be the return of the whole within itself. The first, abstract, only implicitly subsisting being of Brahman would thus have to become a concrete posited unity. But instead, this third moment is only the spiritless determination of coming to be and passing away.¹²⁶

Here Hegel seems to grant that the first two members of the Trimurti follow a genuinely speculative movement: Brahṁā is universal and Vishnu a particular. But the problem appears with the third part of the triad. In a truly dialectical triad the third member should mediate the first two and bring them together. But this is not what happens here. Shiva is not the mediation of universal and particular.

¹²³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 332; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 236.

¹²⁴ Kant, *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion in Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1996, pp. 408f.: “This idea of a threefold divine function is fundamentally very ancient and seems to ground nearly every religion. Thus the Indians thought of Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva; the Persians of Ormuzd, Mithra and Ahriman; the Egyptians of Osiris, Isis and Horus; the ancient Goths and Germans of Odin, Freya and Thor: as three powerful beings constituting one divinity, of which world-legislation belongs to the first, world-government to the other and world-judgment to the third.”

¹²⁵ Hegel, *Episode*, pp. 139f.; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 125: “Brahṁā occurs mainly in relation to Vishnu or Krishna and to Shiva in a more distinct form and as one of the figures of Trimurti, the Indian trinity; a *definition* of the Supreme which must have been of great interest for the Europeans to find in the Indian world-view.”

¹²⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 734; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 622.

Moreover, the third member is not a return to the first so that the circle is closed, but rather the third member ends in a constant repetition, the bad infinity: "instead of being what reconciles, the third moment is only this wild play of begetting and destroying. So the unfolding ends in a wild, delirious whirl."¹²⁷ According to Hegel's speculative logic, infinity represents a circle of dialectical elements which are mutually related. But this is not the case here. Instead, of a closed circle, such as being, nothing, becoming, there is simply a dualistic back and forth of creation and destruction. Given that the third element does not "return to" the first, the triad remains open-ended. There is no dialectical relation among the individual members, each of which simply seems to stand on its own. He explains:

But in the Trimurti the third god is not a concrete totality at all; on the contrary, it is itself only *one*, side by side with the two others, and therefore is likewise abstraction: there is no return into itself, but only a transition into something else, a change, procreation, and destruction. Therefore we must take great care not to try to recover the supreme truth in such first inklings of reason or to recognize the Christian Trinity already in this hint, which in its rhythm does of course contain threefoldness, a fundamental idea in Christianity.¹²⁸

The point in the Christian Trinity is that Christ, the Son, returns to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In this way the first two elements are united, and the circle is closed. But, for Hegel, the Hindu Trimurti is disanalogous to this since Shiva does not represent a return to Brahmā but rather an infinite repetition of the cycle of creation and destruction. This is an example of what Hegel refers to as the bad infinity in contrast to the true, speculative conception of infinity.

5.5. THE FORMS OF WORSHIP: THE RELATION TO BRĀHMA

Hegel explains that worship concerns the way in which one's relation to the divine is conceived. He distinguishes between the individual's disposition first towards Brāhma and then towards the other deities. He begins with the former, outlining three different forms of worship vis-à-vis Brāhma. The goal with worship is to become one with the divine, and this can be done in different ways.

The first attempt to attain Brāhma is through thought and prayer. This form of worship is available to everyone due to the fact that humans are thinking beings.¹²⁹ By means of thought all followers, independent of caste, can commune

¹²⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 592, note 223; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 487f., note 677.

¹²⁸ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 343; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 458.

¹²⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 335f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 238f.

with the divine: “Brahman is thought, human beings think, so Brahman has an existence essentially in human self-consciousness.”¹³⁰ Brāhma is universality and via the universality of thought is attainable to worshipers. Only through thought and prayer can people escape the turmoil of the desires and the transitory world of particularity. Hegel describes the desired state as “a sort of hazy consciousness of having attained perfect mental immobility—the annihilation of all emotion and all volition.”¹³¹

This conception is, however, limited since it is fleeting.¹³² This relation to the divine can only last as long as one is engaged in the process of thought or prayer. In the moment when one is distracted or needs to attend to other things, it is broken. While it is true that thought is one aspect of what it is to be a human being, it is only one aspect. Thus a more satisfactory form of worship must be found to overcome the transitoriness of this first form.

The second attempt to attain Brāhma is through the renunciation of the world and the elimination of the self. The goal here is to become one with the god by eliminating all finite desires and interests by means of austerities and self-negation.¹³³ Hegel explains, “The highest religious position of man, therefore, is being exalted to Brahm. If a Brahmin is asked what Brahm is, he answers: ‘When I fall back within myself, and close all external senses, and say *ô*m to myself, that is Brahm.’ Abstract unity with God is realized in this abstraction from humanity.”¹³⁴ The goal is to become indifferent to everything else and to focus exclusively on destroying the self and becoming one with the divine. This form of worship “consists in the abstraction of self-elevation—the abrogation of real self-consciousness; a negativity which is consequently manifested, on the one hand, in the attainment of torpid unconsciousness—on the other hand in suicide and the extinction of all that is worth calling life, by self-inflicted tortures.”¹³⁵ Hegel gives several examples of this including the story from the *Ramayana* of Vishvamitra’s attempt to attain the powers of the Brāhma by means of severe exercises and austerities.¹³⁶ Hegel also recounts a report from some British explorers, which he read in an article in the London journal, *The Quarterly Review*.¹³⁷ The account of the self-annihilation of the

¹³⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 336, note 262; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 238, note 759. See also *Phil. of Mind*, § 393, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 74. See also *PR*, § 5, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 7, pp. 55–6.

¹³¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 149; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 204.

¹³² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 341f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 244.

¹³³ See Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 280f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 203f. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 342; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 245.

¹³⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 148; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 203.

¹³⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 157; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 214.

¹³⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 597; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 492.

¹³⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 121; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 27f.: “Whoever resigns everything cannot be punished. One practices mortification, becomes a hermit so that one can only see to the end of one’s nose, undertakes pilgrimages on foot, or covers long distances on one’s knees. In particular, one commits suicide, sacrifices oneself, not (as in human sacrifices) others)—like

Hindu pilgrims in the mountains leaves both Hegel and his source horrified and appalled.

Hegel explains, "The highest point that can be attained in the cultus is stupefaction, the annihilation of self-consciousness; this is not affirmative liberation and reconciliation, but rather wholly negative liberation, complete abstraction."¹³⁸ Hegel claims that this conception makes clear the premodern nature of Hinduism. The principle of modernity is precisely the awareness and celebration of the individual. It is a recognition that there is something valuable and important in the individual as such. But, according to Hegel, in Hinduism just the opposite is the case: "In the Hindu view, persistence within one's own consciousness is ungodly. But human freedom consists precisely in being free in willing, knowing, and acting."¹³⁹ Thus, for Hegel, the Hindu principle openly denies the value of the individual and is as far away from modernity as it could be. He continues, "the elevation of the singular self-consciousness, which throughout the above-mentioned austerities strives to perpetuate its own abstraction, is rather a flight from the concrete actuality of heart and mind and the actuality of life."¹⁴⁰ Hegel explains the difference between the Hindu view and how the modern European conceives of the individual: "It is self-evident that a European civil life based on personality, on free and absolute rights, is not to be found in such a religion. Genuinely ethical relationships—those of family, human benevolence, the obligation to recognize infinite personality and human dignity—become impossible with savage fancy and abominable deeds."¹⁴¹ In short, the conception of the human being that is reflected in Hinduism has not progressed very far on the road that leads to subjective freedom.

The third attempt to attain Brāhma concerns the caste of Brahmins. While the members of the other castes must work hard to attain the relation to the divine and the status of being a holy person, the members of the Brahmin caste have this as their birthright.¹⁴² This represents the third stage. Hegel explains that those belonging to the class of the Brahmins are spared the toil that those of the other classes are subjected to: "The Brahmins, in virtue of their birth, are

the countless wives who are nothing for themselves, who kill themselves near the temple or hurl themselves into the Ganges. They seek death especially in the Himalayas, in the abyss, or in the snow (Webb, also Moorcroft, the Englishman who was in the Nitee Pass before Webb—*Quart. Rev.*, no. xlv, pp. 415ff.)." Hegel refers to the article "Sur l'Élévation des Montagnes de l'Inde, par Alexandre de Humboldt," *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 22, no. 44, 1820, pp. 415–30. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 602; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 497.

¹³⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 598, note 244; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 490f., note 722–44.

¹³⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 598, note 244; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 491, note 722–44.

¹⁴⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 343, note 280; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 246, note 888.

¹⁴¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 121; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 28.

¹⁴² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 148; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 203. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 344f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 247. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 599; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 493f.

already in possession of the divine. The distinction of castes involves, therefore, a distinction between present deities and mere limited mortals.”¹⁴³ Hegel explains, “The Brahmans are the existence of Brahman.”¹⁴⁴ So in contrast to prayer and silent mediation, which was open to all believers, this form of worship is the exclusive purview of a single class.

Hegel’s objection to this view is again that the nature of the divine is abstract and thus cut off from the rich sphere of actuality that consists of particular actions and thoughts. Since there is no connection to the concrete particular, the actual behavior of the Brahmans becomes arbitrary. Although this caste of people has a special status because of their birth, there is no guarantee that in actuality they will live pious and upstanding lives. Their particular actions are entirely detached from any universal principle. Individuals from the caste of Brahmans can thus become arrogant and complacent, in no way living up to any higher religious ideal. For Hegel, the defect can be traced back to the divinity which is conceived as abstract universality that is to be achieved at the expense of particularity.

5.6. THE FORMS OF WORSHIP: THE RELATION TO THE OTHER DEITIES

The second category of worship concerns the relation to other deities (besides Brāhma and the Trimurti).¹⁴⁵ Since the conception of Brāhma is so abstract, it can be filled with any concrete content. Moreover, since Brāhma is conceived as the creative power of nature, anything at all in nature can be perceived to have this power. The Hindus worship animals and plants as having some divine element since they have a force of nature within them.

While the first aspect of Brāhma was universality, the second aspect is particularity, and it is this aspect that, according to Hegel, has the upper hand. Brāhma contains within it all of the other lesser deities, including the main ones, Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva: “In this it falls apart into the numberless multiplicity of weaker and stronger, richer and poorer spirits.”¹⁴⁶ He explains, “for the principle of the Hindu religion is the manifestation of diversity [in ‘avatars’]. These then, fall outside that abstract unity of thought and, as that which deviates from it, constitute the variety found in the world of

¹⁴³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 148; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 203.

¹⁴⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 598, note 244; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 494, note 762–3.

¹⁴⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 348; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 250: “The second element is the relationship of the manifold consciousness to . . . the numerous divinities.”

¹⁴⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 420; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 530.

sense, the variety of intellectual conceptions in an unreflected sensuous form.”¹⁴⁷ There are a seemingly infinite number of avatars or manifestations of the abstract divine; these take a multitude of different forms. They are all concrete objects that humans perceive with their senses.¹⁴⁸ Hegel explains further, “For these subordinate gods, with Indra, air and sky, at their head, the more detailed content is provided above all by the universal forces of nature, by the stars, streams, mountains, in all different features of their efficacy, their alteration, their influence whether beneficent or harmful, preservative or destructive.”¹⁴⁹

One begins to hear a critical tone, when Hegel explains, “Starting from Brāhma and Trimurti, Indian imagination proceeds still further fantastically to an infinite number of most multitudinously shaped gods. For those universal meanings, viewed as what is essentially divine, are met again in thousands of thousands of phenomena which now themselves are personified and symbolized as gods.”¹⁵⁰ Hegel emphasizes the numerous conceptions of the divine in terms of different plants and animals or in short any kind of object of nature: “Hence sun, moon, the Himalayas, the Ganges and the other rivers, are represented as persons; and similarly, particular subjective sentiments such as vengeance, or powers such as evil, are personified; everything is in confusion. Their being is a personification even if they are represented as animals; they are spoken of in human terms, and always as alive.”¹⁵¹ Every animal is in principle a candidate for a divinity: “The parrot, the cow, the ape, etc., are likewise incarnations of god, yet are not therefore elevated above their nature.”¹⁵² Since everything is conceived as a god, Hegel designates Hinduism a “universal pantheism.”¹⁵³ He was, as noted, not the first to make this association of Hinduism and pantheism, but it is this point in Hinduism that gave rise to this association that enjoyed such wide currency in the German philosophy of his day.

The desire to become Brāhma led to abstraction since Brāhma was abstract. This resulted in an attempt to escape from the world of desire and mundane interests. Now, however, the focus on concrete particular things leads in just

¹⁴⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 156; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 213.

¹⁴⁸ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 420; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 530: “Self-conscious Spirit that has withdrawn into itself from the shapeless essence, or has raised its immediacy to self in general, determines its unitary nature as a manifoldness of being-for-self, and is the religion of spiritual perception.”

¹⁴⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 343; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 458.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 593; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 489. See also *Phil. of Mind*, § 393, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 75. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 141; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 194. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 156; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 213. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 157; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 214.

¹⁵² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 141; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 194.

¹⁵³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 141; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 193. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 141; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 193f.: “The Indian view of things is a universal pantheism, a pantheism, however, of imagination, not of thought. One substance pervades the whole of things, and all individualizations are directly vitalized and animated into particular powers.”

the opposite direction, namely, to a concentration on the physical and sensual enjoyment. Worship here “consists in a wild tumult of excess; when all sense of individuality has vanished from consciousness by immersion in the merely natural.”¹⁵⁴ Hegel explains further, the Hindu “immerses himself by a voluptuous intoxication in the merely natural.”¹⁵⁵ Instead of denying the self with privation, one revels in sensual satisfaction. Hegel refers to this contradiction as “the double form of worship” in Hinduism.¹⁵⁶ This view of Hinduism as morally deprived was a well-known criticism at the time and was often appealed to in support of arguments for the superiority of Greco-Roman culture.

According to Hegel, the shortcoming of this conception is that Brāhma remains overly abstract and for this reason lacks content. As a result, the focus shifts to the other side, the realm of particularity and the multitude of different gods. Since Brāhma is abstract, there is nothing about it that would unite the various individual gods into any coherent group or order. So these individual deities are not related in any meaningful way to the general deity, Brāhma. Thus different deities, often worshipped in different places, become rivals to one another. This leads to a confusing chaos of individual gods in complex relations to one another. With no meaningful principle of order, the different gods come to vie with one another for strength and influence: “This pantheism which, to begin with, is the passive subsistence of these spiritual atoms develops into a hostile movement within itself.”¹⁵⁷ The hostilities take on a local and national aspect as individual deities are worshipped by specific groups in specific regions. Since Brāhma is abstract and empty, it has no way of unifying or reconciling these competing gods: “the Hindus are divided into a multitude of sects under various deities; some worship Vishnu, others Shiva, and bloody wars have been fought on this account. Even nowadays, on the occasion of the great yearly festivals where millions of people are often assembled, disputes and fighting break out over the primacy accorded to one deity or the other.”¹⁵⁸

The abstract god Brāhma cannot be brought into harmony with the manifold of lesser deities, who are concrete. This is an obvious contradiction of the universal and the particular, of the one and the many. Hegel writes, “For, on the one hand, the purely invisible, the absolute as such . . . is grasped as the truly divine, while, on the other hand, individual things in concrete reality are also, in their sensuous existence, directly regarded by imagination as divine manifestations.”¹⁵⁹ This leads to an uncertain relation of the universal and the particular since it appears that the universal deity is ultimately detached from

¹⁵⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 157; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 214.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 420; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 530.

¹⁵⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 334; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 236.

¹⁵⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 337–8; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 451.

the particulars which are supposed to be manifestations of it.¹⁶⁰ The incarnations have no meaningful grounding since they are not a reflection of the divinity, which is abstract and universal.

Here at the end it is clear why Hegel refers to Hinduism as the “religion of fantasy.” This designation refers to the manifold deities that it contains. In a certain sense it can be regarded as a great richness for a religion that it contains so many deities, each with its own concrete properties, myths, and forms of worship. However, for Hegel, with no ordering principle, this collapses into a confused and meaningless chaos: “The Hindu mythology is therefore only a wild extravagance of fancy, in which nothing has a settled form.”¹⁶¹ Hegel explains by way of summary, “As the Hindu Spirit is a state of dreaming and mental transiency—a self-oblivious dissolution—objects also dissolve for it into unreal images and indefinitude. This feature is absolutely characteristic; and this alone would furnish us with a clear idea of the Spirit of the Hindus, from which all that has been said might be deduced.”¹⁶²

5.7. THE LACK OF SUBJECTIVE FREEDOM

Hegel explains what he takes to be the limitation of the Hindu view as follows: “The first extreme is then the sensuality of Hindu religion, the fact that it is a religion of nature, that it directly reveres natural objects as divinity, and that human beings relate themselves to these natural objects as they relate themselves to their own essential being.”¹⁶³ As has been noted, the conception of the divine is, according to Hegel, the self-conception of a people. Thus what the people regard as the essential aspect of itself, it sees reflected in the divine. The fact that the Hindus revere animals and natural objects is, for Hegel, a demonstration of the fact that they have not yet developed a conception of themselves as something higher than nature. They have not yet managed to conceive of themselves as spirit.

According to this view, there is no enduring human essence, but instead everything is transitory and passes away. Hegel describes this as follows: “In this religion, which still belongs to nature, this process of becoming is still grasped as sheer becoming, sheer change. This distinction is essential and is grounded upon the whole standpoint.”¹⁶⁴ With Shiva we have the bad infinity and not the good speculative infinity. This undermines the positive conception

¹⁶⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 157; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 215.

¹⁶¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 155; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 212. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 276; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 197; The Hindu religion is “a giddy whirl from one extreme to the other . . .”

¹⁶² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 162; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 221.

¹⁶³ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 274; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 195.

¹⁶⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 592; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 487.

of recognition. Hegel continues, "Consciousness or spirit is also a change in the first or immediate unity. The other element is in the primal division or judgment, the having of an other over against one. I know that I exist in such a way that, inasmuch as the other is for me, I have returned to myself in that other, I am within myself."¹⁶⁵ The relation between Brāhma and its incarnations is not one of dialectical recognition. Brāhma does not become what it is by seeing itself in the others, i.e., in its incarnations; rather, Brāhma remains alone and isolated. For Hegel, to define the divine simply as something beyond or outside oneself is not to give the other any determinate content. To speak of something "outside oneself" seems to imply a relation to another thing, but in fact it is merely a self-relation, since it refers immediately back to the original point of departure, the self.

There is no recognition of the human being as something higher. Again the conception of the divine is a natural reflection of the conception of human beings in their culture. Hegel explains:

We duly note that [the Hindus] are so generous as to share their mode of being; but we must state that this liberality has its ground in an impoverished image of themselves and, to be precise, in the fact that their humanity does not yet have in it the content of freedom, of the eternal, of actual being truly in and for itself, and they do not yet know that their own content or specification is nobler than the content of a spring or a tree . . . among the Hindus there is no higher self-feeling or self-awareness present. The view that they have of being is simply the one they have of themselves; they set themselves on the same plane with all their images of nature.¹⁶⁶

Recognition with respect to spirit has not yet arisen among the Hindus, and so their self-definition is only vis-à-vis nature.

Hegel recalls here the forms of self-sacrifice and self-negation that are required in order to reach the level of the Brāhman. The holy person is not one who cultivates his mental faculties in a positive way, but rather someone who deprives himself of the physical and the mental by means of extreme exercises, discipline, and austerities. Instead of becoming closer to the divine by means of one's genuinely human faculty—rational cognition—one does so by eliminating this, and thereby reducing oneself to a level that is lower than human. For the Hindus, "Everything concrete is only negative when measured against this abstraction. Every aspect of the Hindu cultus follows from this, such as the fact that human beings sacrifice themselves and their parents and children."¹⁶⁷ For Hegel, such sacrifices demonstrate clearly that among the Hindus there is no respect for the individual or for subjectivity. The holy person is the one who eliminates his own subjectivity as much as possible.

¹⁶⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 592n; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 487n and following.

¹⁶⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 601; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 496.

¹⁶⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 602; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 497.

If the conception of the divine is too abstract, then no meaningful reflection of the human being can be found in it. Hegel explains:

If the absolute is grasped as what is spiritually free and inwardly concrete, then self-consciousness occurs as something essential in religious consciousness only to the extent that it becomes capable of moving in inwardly concrete fashion and is represented and experienced as possessing content. But if the absolute is an abstraction such as the beyond or the supreme being, so too is self-consciousness, because it is naturally thoughtful, naturally good, what it ought to be.¹⁶⁸

Here Hegel refers to his criticism of the Enlightenment's conception of God as the Supreme Being. The point seems clearly that the notion of Brāhma like the Deists' notion of God is too abstract and therefore empty of content. As a result the conception of self-consciousness has no meaningful content. There is in this view nothing of the subjectivity or inwardness that we take to characterize the modern individual.

One result of the conception of humans as simply a part of nature is that human value and dignity are not recognized. Hegel explains:

human life has no higher worth than the being of natural objects or the life of a natural being. Human life has worth only when humanity itself is inwardly nobler; but for the Hindus human life is something contemptible and despicable—it has not more value than a sip of water. Here one cannot ascribe worth to self in an affirmative way, but only negatively: life gains worth only through negation of self.¹⁶⁹

For Hegel, the Hindus were indifferent to the value of human life. He mentions numerous customs such as infanticide, or the burning of widows with their dead husbands (suttee or sati), as well as the rigors of asceticism. All of these practices are, in his eyes, clear evidence that the Hindus have not yet reached a point where the individual is valued and where human freedom can be developed.

The caste system is thought to be established by nature.¹⁷⁰ According to Hegel, it renders impossible the development of human freedom. The members of the specific castes are permitted only to do specific work that is associated with their caste, but the individual has no right to decide for him- or herself what profession to enter: "For while the individual ought properly to be empowered to choose his occupation, in the East, on the contrary, internal subjectivity is not yet recognized as independent; and if distinctions obtrude themselves, their recognition is accompanied by the belief that the individual

¹⁶⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 344n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 246n.

¹⁶⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 602; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 496f.

¹⁷⁰ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 257–64; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 174–82. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 285f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 210f.

does not choose his particular position for himself, but receives it from nature.”¹⁷¹ But the main problem is the radical inequalities that exist among the different castes, with the class of Brahmans enjoying great privileges and the lower classes being subject to harsh conditions and countless social disadvantages. It is thought that such matters are predetermined by nature. Thus the idea is clear: nature is superior to spirit or the individual.

For the caste system to remain in place many rules and ordinances must be observed. The entire society is permeated with regulations of this kind that dictate with great precision what is and is not permitted for individuals in each of the castes. Hegel sarcastically recites a litany of such rules that the caste of the Brahmans is obliged to observe:

Throughout the day a person has to perform specific ceremonies; upon arising, one must subject oneself to certain rules. Upon awakening one has to recite prayers, to stand up using a specific foot, to clean the teeth with the leaf of a specific plant, to go to the river, taking water into the mouth and spitting it out again three times, and so forth, all the while reciting particular formulas.¹⁷²

The Indians, like the Chinese, are obsessed with the external world. This is, for Hegel, a clear indication that the sphere of the internal is lacking: “In this way the Hindu lives dependent on external matters. Inner freedom, morality, one’s own intellect, can find no place here. The Hindus exist in this domination by externality, with the result that they can have no inherent ethical life.”¹⁷³ The inner sphere of conscience and subjectivity is absent.

A related element here is, according to Hegel, the lowly status of women in India. Women are denied basic rights; they are not permitted to determine for themselves certain fundamental things about their own lives. In short, the women of India are lacking subjective freedom. Hegel explains this first with respect to the laws of inheritance: “As for justice and personal freedom, there is thus no glimmer of it. The female gender is wholly excluded from a right of inheritance, and even debarred as such from making a will. When there are no male heirs, the goods go to the rajah.”¹⁷⁴ Moreover, women “are not allowed to eat in the presence of the husband, just as a lower class person is not allowed to eat in the presence of someone of a higher class.”¹⁷⁵ Similarly, they are not allowed to testify in court. In connection with marriage, the matter is no better. According to Hegel, acquiring a wife takes the form of a mercantile exchange between the bridegroom and the parents of the woman to be married. A woman as potential wife is regarded as something that has a specific market value, but is not recognized as a person with her own inward

¹⁷¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 147; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 201.

¹⁷² Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 270; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 189.

¹⁷³ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 271; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 190.

¹⁷⁴ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 268; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 187.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

sphere and subjectivity. Women do not have the opportunity to choose their own husbands, but rather the husbands are chosen for them by their fathers.¹⁷⁶ If their fathers are not able to find a suitable husband for their daughters, the fate of the latter is to end up as one of many wives to a wealthy man.¹⁷⁷ In short, women “are in general subordinate and in a state of degradation.”¹⁷⁸

Hegel states that “history presents a people with their own image in a condition which thereby becomes objective to them.”¹⁷⁹ The image of India, which is reflected in Hinduism, is one in which humans have still not emerged from nature. They are still considered a part of the natural world, and for this reason some of the fundamental elements of what Hegel calls “spirit” are lacking in both their religion and their social order. History must progress for the sphere of spirit to become more clearly recognized. According to Hegel, this happens first in Persia and Egypt.

¹⁷⁶ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 268; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 187.

¹⁷⁷ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 269; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 188.

¹⁷⁸ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 268; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 187.

¹⁷⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 163; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 221.

Zoroastrianism

The Religion of the Good or Light

Hegel treats three religions as transitional between the religions of nature and those of spirit, namely, Zoroastrianism, the Syrian religion, and the Egyptian religion. Each of these religions is, strictly speaking, a religion of nature, but they are superior to the first three, the Chinese religion, Buddhism, and Hinduism since they contain the first inkling of the principle of the human spirit. The first of the transitional religions that Hegel explores in his lectures is Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Persia.¹ He treats this religion not only in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, but also in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,² the *Lectures on Aesthetics*,³ and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (where it falls under the cryptic heading “God as Light”).⁴ There is also a brief account in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.⁵

This religion was founded by the prophet and religious teacher Zoroaster, also called Zerdusht or Zarathustra, in a time of great antiquity, the exact date of which is still a matter of scholarly debate. Zoroaster is said to have written the hymns known as the *Gathas*, which constitute a part of the *Avesta*, the sacred text of this religion. Zoroastrianism is characterized by its worship of fire, something that is in many ways understandable given the importance of the use of fire in the life of early human beings. Fire was the source of light, warmth, and protection and constituted the center of social activity in a time even before the development of agriculture and settled communities. It has also been suggested that the worship of fire is connected to the natural

¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 352–8; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 254–9. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 609–25; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 504–18. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 737–8; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 624–5. *NR*, pp. 186–99. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 70–82; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 422–34.

² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 173–81; *Jub.* vol. 11, pp. 233–43. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 304–33; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 233–68, especially *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 310–16; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 240–8. *OW*, pp. 414–46.

³ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 325–32; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 435–45.

⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 418–20; *Jub.* vol. 2, pp. 528–30.

⁵ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 83–5; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 116–18.

phenomenon of the naphtha springs on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. These are pockets of naphtha near the surface of the earth which can be used to produce fire. Hegel's understanding of Zoroastrianism as a transitional religion seems in general to square with the view of modern scholarship, which sees Zoroaster as attempting to do away with the gods of nature of the Indo-Iranians and replace them with more anthropomorphic deities.⁶ There is also a connection between ancient India and ancient Persia, with some elements of the *Rig Veda* being found again in the *Avesta*. This would seem to support Hegel's controversial claims about the movement of spirit from east to west. According to this view, there was a common religious starting point, which more or less stagnated in India but was then developed further in Persia.

Comparatively speaking, Hegel treats Zoroastrianism with somewhat more respect than he did the foregoing religions of China and India.⁷ This is presumably due to the fact that it figures as one of the transitional religions that is in the process of overcoming the purely natural and thus discovering the notion of spirit. However, it should be noted that over the course of time Hegel apparently changed his mind about the proper role and placement of this religion in the historical development of spirit. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1807 it is treated immediately before Hinduism as the first of the natural religions. By contrast, later in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* in the 1820s it is consistently treated *after* it. This squares with his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where his treatment of Persia comes *after* his treatment of India. In short, he seems in time to have developed a more positive appreciation for Zoroastrianism than he had initially.

6.1. THE STATE OF PERSIAN STUDIES IN HEGEL'S TIME

Although Zoroastrianism continued after the collapse of the Persian Empire, it all but disappeared when it was subject to rigorous persecution with the rise of Islam in the 7th century.⁸ The remaining followers left Persia and scattered,

⁶ See Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London et al: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1979, pp. 1–29. Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, New York: Oxford University Press 1938, pp. 39ff.

⁷ See, for example, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 173; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 233: "The European who goes from Persia to India, observes, therefore, a prodigious contrast. Whereas in the former country he finds himself still somewhat at home, and meets with European dispositions, human virtues and human passions—as soon as he crosses the Indus (i.e., into the latter region), he encounters the most repellent characteristics, pervading every single feature of society."

⁸ See Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 437ff. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, pp. 145ff.

some going north and settling along the shores of the Caspian Sea, and some going east into western India. In Hegel's time this religion was only beginning to be explored by modern scholarship, and for this reason his factual knowledge about it is, comparatively speaking, rather limited.⁹ The sad state of the research literature on this subject in Hegel's day is evidenced by the fact that he uses the ancient Greek writers Herodotus, Strabo, and Xenophon as some of his main sources of information.¹⁰ He also refers to a brief account in Diogenes Laertius,¹¹ and it is also quite probable that he made use of Plutarch, who mentions this religion in the work *Isis and Osiris*.¹² But Hegel can hardly be faulted for his lack of information since the more intensive research on ancient Persia only took place in the decades after his death.

The English orientalist Thomas Hyde (1636–1703) was one of the first European scholars to be passionately interested in the religion of ancient Persia. His main work, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum*, is thought to be the first scholarly treatment of this topic.¹³ Hyde had a genuine sympathy for Zoroastrianism and tried to establish connections between its teachings and ancient Judaism and Christianity. He collected the information about Zoroastrianism that was available in the ancient Greek and Roman authors. Unfortunately, he did not know the *Avesta*, and his main source was the collection known as the *Sad dar*, a Persian book that contained a wealth of information about Zoroastrian beliefs and practices.

As curator of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Hyde issued an appeal for original manuscripts about Zoroastrianism. In 1718 George Boucher, an Englishman living in India, obtained a copy of a part of the *Avesta*, namely, the *Vendidad* from the Parsis in Surat. He sent this to the Bodleian Library, where it was added to the collection in 1723.¹⁴ But it remained a puzzle since

⁹ For Hegel's sources see the "Editorial Introduction" in *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 8, pp. 15–17, pp. 40–1, pp. 63–4, pp. 78–9.

¹⁰ See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 616, note 284; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 510, note 149–83.

¹¹ Hegel quotes Diogenes Laertius in *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 83; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 116: "This simple eternal existence possesses according to Diogenes Laertius (I.8), 'the two principles Ormuzd (Ὠρομάσδης) and Ahriman (Ἀρειμάνιος), the rulers over good and evil.'" See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vols 1–2, trans. by R.D. Hicks, London: William Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1925 (*Loeb Classical Library*), vol. 1, pp. 9ff., Book I, 8.

¹² *Plutarchi Chaeronensis quae supersunt Omnia, cum adnotationibus variorum adjectaque lectionis diversitate Opera*, vols 1–14, ed. by J.G. Hutten, Tübingen: J.G. Cotta 1791–1804 (*Hegel's Library*, 470–83). See *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vols 1–16, trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt, London: William Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1936 (*Loeb Classical Library*), vol. 5, Chapters 46–7, pp. 111–15 (369d–370c).

¹³ Thomas Hyde, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum, eorumque magorum*, Oxford: E Theatro Sheldoniano 1700. A second edition appeared under the title *Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum religionis historia*, Oxford: Clarendon 1760.

¹⁴ See "Discours préliminaire ou Introduction au Zend-Avesta," in *Zend-Avesta, Ouvrage de Zoroastre, Contenant les Idées Théologiques, Physiques & Morales de ce Législateur, les Cérémonies du Culte Religieux qu'il a établi, & plusieurs traits importants relatifs à l'ancienne Histoire*

no one could read it. This became a call to action for the French orientalist Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, whom Hegel refers to directly.¹⁵ Anquetil-Duperron was an important pioneer in both Indology and Persian studies. The Frenchman was intrigued by Hyde's research, and, according to his own account, when he saw facsimiles of the manuscripts from the Oxford collection in Paris in 1754, he was determined to crack the code.¹⁶ Although still a young man, he decided to travel to Asia and learn the language in which they were written with the purpose of translating them. He immediately enlisted as a soldier in the service of the French Indian Company in order to travel to India, departing from Paris in the fall of 1755. He was soon relieved of his duties as a soldier, through the help of his friends, and was subsequently supported by a government allowance. His knowledge of Zoroastrianism came from contact with Parsi priests during his six-year stay in Mughal, India from 1755–61.¹⁷ By the time he finally returned to France, he had collected some 180 manuscripts. After ten years of studying his finds, he published the first translation of the *Avesta* in French in 1771, under the title *Zend-Avesta, Ouvrage de Zoroastre, Contenant les Idées Théologiques, Physiques & Morales de ce Législateur, les Cérémonies du Culte Religieux qu'il a établi, & plusieurs traits importants relatifs à l'ancienne Histoire des Perses*.¹⁸ This work was based on a Persian translation and not the original text, which, as noted, was written in the Avestan language, which had been dead for many centuries. Moreover, there were serious problems with the text since Anquetil-Duperron's teacher did not understand the language of the *Avesta* adequately and, moreover, Anquetil-Duperron did not understand his teacher's language, Pahlavi, adequately. Despite the dubiousness of the translation, the publication of this material caused a sensation in Europe, not least of all due to the author's detailed and somewhat self-indulgent description of his adventures and travails

des Perses, vols 1–2.2, trans. by Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron, Paris: N.M. Tilliard 1771, vol. 1, p. v. See also "Introduction," in *The Zend-Avesta*, vols 1–3, trans. by James Darmesteter and L.H. Mills, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1880–7 (*The Sacred Books of the East*), vol. 1, p. xiv.

¹⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 616, note 284; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 510, note 149–83. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 307; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 237.

¹⁶ "Discours préliminaire ou Introduction au Zend-Avesta," in *Zend-Avesta, Ouvrage de Zoroastre*, vol. 1, p. vi.

¹⁷ See Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2010, pp. 363–439. Raymond Schwab, *Vie d'Anquetil Duperron*, Paris: Ernest Leroux 1934. Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 2007, pp. 125f. Nora Kathleen Firby, *European Travellers and their Perceptions of Zoroastrians in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer 1988 (*Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, Supplement, vol. 14), pp. 155–71.

¹⁸ *Zend-Avesta, Ouvrage de Zoroastre, Contenant les Idées Théologiques, Physiques & Morales de ce Législateur, les Cérémonies du Culte Religieux qu'il a établi, & plusieurs traits importants relatifs à l'ancienne Histoire des Perses*, vols 1–2.2, trans by Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron, Paris: N.M. Tilliard 1771.

in India in his lengthy and colorful “Discours préliminaire ou Introduction au Zend-Avesta,” which prefaced his translation.

Anquetil-Duperron’s work also caught the attention of scholars in the German-speaking world. The Professor of Theology at the University of Kiel, Johann Friedrich Kleuker (1749–1827),¹⁹ published a three-volume German translation of Anquetil-Duperron’s work from 1776–7.²⁰ Kleuker chose to translate only short excerpts about Anquetil-Duperron’s actual journey and concentrated instead on the translations of the *Avesta*. It is unclear whether Hegel worked with Anquetil-Duperron’s original text or Kleuker’s German translation, but it seems quite probable that he was familiar with both.²¹ When Anquetil-Duperron’s work was criticized by European scholars such as the orientalist William Jones,²² who doubted its authenticity, Kleuker published a lengthy appendix to this work in which he attempted to defend the Frenchman’s research and translation.²³ In 1789 Kleuker produced a more didactical introduction to the material under the title, *Zend-Avesta im Kleinen. Das ist Ormuzd’s Lichtgesetz oder Wort des Lebens an Zoroastre*.²⁴ This work is divided into three parts. The first part contains both a history of Zoroastrianism from its early beginnings to its persecution by the followers of Islam and an account of the life and times of Zoroaster. The second part contains excerpts from the *Avesta*, while the third part consists of a critical essay about the nature of the religion with particular focus on the deity Ormuzd. These works made Kleuker one of the leading experts on Zoroastrianism in the German-speaking world.

Kleuker’s friend, Herder discusses Persia briefly in volume 3 of his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* from 1787.²⁵ He is considerably more critical of Persian culture than Hegel, especially with respect to the

¹⁹ Frank Aschoff, *Der theologische Weg Johann Friedrich Kleukers (1749–1827)*, Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang 1991. Werner Schütz, *Johann Friedrich Kleuker. Seine Stellung in der Religionsgeschichte des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts*, Bonn: Röhrscheid 1927, especially pp. 67ff.

²⁰ *Zend-Avesta, Zoroasters lebendiges Wort, worin die Lehren und Meinungen dieses Gesetzgebers von Gott, Welt, Nature, Menschen; ingleichen die Ceremonien des heiligen Dienstes der Parsen u. s. f. aufbehalten sind*, vols 1–3, trans. by Johann Friedrich Kleuker, Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1776–77.

²¹ See LPR, vol. 2, p. 617n; VPR, Part 2, p. 781, commentary to 510 footnote (3).

²² Jones took Anquetil-Duperron to task in an anonymous open letter in French: *Lettre à Monsieur A*** Du P***. Dans Laquelle est Compris L’Examen de sa Traduction des Livres Attribués à Zoroastre*, London: P. Elmsly 1771.

²³ Johann Friedrich Kleuker, *Anhang zum Zend-Avesta*, vols 1–2, Leipzig and Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1781–83.

²⁴ Johann Friedrich Kleuker, *Zend-Avesta im Kleinen. Das ist Ormuzd’s Lichtgesetz oder Wort des Lebens an Zoroaster dargestellt in einem wesentlichen Auszuge aus den Zendbüchern, als Urkunden des alten Magisch-Zoroastrischen Religionssystems; nebst ganz neuen Abhandlungen und vollständigen Erläuterungen aller hier vorkommenden Sachen und Begriffe*, Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1789.

²⁵ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vols 1–4, Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1784–91, vol. 3, pp. 74–84. (English translation:

imperialistic aspect of the Persian state. But, like Hegel, Herder discusses Zoroastrianism as an important aspect of ancient Persia and refers directly to the work of Anquetil-Duperron.²⁶ He mentions many of the same elements of Zoroastrianism as Hegel, for example, the dualism of light and darkness in Ormuzd and Ahriman, the Amesha Spentas, the worship of fire, and the importance of ethics.²⁷ His general assessment that the Persians' religious practices display a "low degree of mental cultivation" stands in contrast to Hegel's more positive view.²⁸ While it is true that in Hegel's grand scheme of the development of spirit the Persians occupy a fairly rudimentary stage, nonetheless he saves his most viperous remarks for the Africans, Chinese, and Hindus and seems considerably more favorably disposed towards the Persians, whom he sees as distant cousins to the Europeans.

Inspired in part by the adventures of Anquetil-Duperron, the German mathematician and cartographer Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) undertook a voyage, under the auspices of the Danish crown, to the Arabian Peninsula. The journey lasted from 1761–8, and on his return trip to Europe, with the rest of his expedition having already perished, Niebuhr explored the ruins of Persepolis in 1766. He made copies of the mysterious cuneiform inscriptions that he found there. Upon his return to Europe he published an account of his journey in *Beschreibung von Arabien* in 1772.²⁹ Then followed the richly illustrated two-volume *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern* from 1774–8.³⁰ This work was a major event in Europe and was soon translated into Dutch, French, Swedish, and English. Hegel knew about Niebuhr's journey through the account given by the Swiss scholar Jacob Samuel Wytttenbach (1748–1830) in his *Reise und Beobachtungen durch Aegypten und Arabien aus den grossen Werken verschiedener gelehrten Reisenden*.³¹

The Danish philologist Rasmus Rask (1787–1832) traveled to, among other places, Persia and India in 1820 and collected a number of Zoroastrian

Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man, vols 1–2, trans. by T. Churchill, 2nd ed., London: J. Johnson 1803, vol. 2, pp. 63–72.)

²⁶ See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 81n. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 69n.)

²⁷ See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, pp. 80–4. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, pp. 69–72.)

²⁸ See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 82. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 70.)

²⁹ Carsten Niebuhr, *Beschreibung von Arabien, Aus eigenen Beobachtungen und im Lande selbst gesammelten Nachrichten*, Copenhagen: Nicolaus Möller 1772.

³⁰ Carsten Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern*, vols 1–2, Copenhagen: Nicolaus Möller 1774–8.

³¹ Jacob Samuel Wytttenbach, *Reise und Beobachtungen durch Aegypten und Arabien aus den grossen Werken verschiedener gelehrten Reisenden*, vols 1–2, Bern and Winterthur: bey der typographischen Gesellschaft & Heinrich Steiner 1779–81 (*Hegel's Library*, 716).

manuscripts, written in both Avestan and Pahlavi, which he brought back with him to Denmark in 1823.³² The *Avesta*, which is composed of texts written over a very long period of time, contains a number of languages and dialects all belonging to Avestan, a group belonging to the Indo-Iranian languages. Upon studying the texts, Rask realized that this language was related to the Sanskrit of the *Rig Veda*. He published his results in 1826 in Danish,³³ and a German translation of this work appeared in Berlin the same year under the title *Über das Alter und die Echtheit der Zend-Sprache und des Zend-Avesta*.³⁴ Hegel was apparently aware of this work since he refers to Rask's results in his lectures.³⁵

In addition to the *Avesta* Hegel was also familiar with the epic poem the *Shahnameh* by the poet Hakim Abu'l-Qāsim Ferdowsī Tūsi or simply Ferdowsī (AD 940–1020).³⁶ Although Ferdowsī was a Muslim, this work, the national epic of Persia, was written to celebrate the ancient Persian cultural traditions, including Zoroastrianism, that flourished prior to the Arab invasion of the 7th century. It tells the partly mythical and partly historical story of Persia from the Creation to the arrival of the Arabs. Hegel owned a copy of Joseph Görres' edition entitled *Das Heldenbuch von Iran aus dem Shah Nameh des Firdussi* from 1820.³⁷

Hegel also knew the work of Johann Gottlieb Rhode (1762–1827), who earned his living as a private tutor, editor of different journals, and finally professor at a military school in Breslau. Hegel owned a copy of Rhode's *Ueber Alter und Werth einiger morgenländischen Urkunden, in Beziehung auf Religion, Geschichte und Alterthumskunde überhaupt*.³⁸ The first chapter of this book is a defense of the work of Anquetil-Duperron and Kleuker against the charges of William Jones. The second chapter discusses the Zoroastrian deities in some detail and quotes fairly extensively from the *Avesta* and

³² For Rask's highly interesting life, see Kirsten Rask, *Rasmus Rask. Store tanker i et lille land*, Copenhagen: Gad 2002.

³³ Rasmus Rask, *Om Zendsprogets og Zendavestas Ælde og Ægthed*, Copenhagen: Andreas Seidelin 1826. At the time the *Avesta* was referred to as the *Zend-Avesta*, and it was thought that Zend was the language. But this was later discovered to be a translation error since "zend" simply means "interpretation," and the formulation that caused confusion (*Zand-i-Avesta*) referred to the commentaries or interpretations of the *Avesta*, of which there was a long tradition.

³⁴ Rasmus Rask, *Über das Alter und die Echtheit der Zend-Sprache und des Zend-Avesta, und Herstellung des Zend-Alphabets; nebst einer Übersicht des gesammten Sprachstammes*, trans. by Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1826.

³⁵ See LPR, vol. 2, p. 616, note 284; VPR, Part 2, p. 510, note 149–183: "these books are written in the ancient Zend language, a sister language to Sanskrit."

³⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 182f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 244f. LPWH, vol. 1, pp. 321f.; VPWG, vol. 1, pp. 253f. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 1097; *Jub.*, vol. 14, p. 402.

³⁷ Joseph Görres, *Das Heldenbuch von Iran aus dem Shah Nameh des Firdussi*, vols 1–2, Berlin: G. Reimar 1820 (*Hegel's Library*, 807).

³⁸ Johann Gottlieb Rhode, *Ueber Alter und Werth einiger morgenländischen Urkunden, in Beziehung auf Religion, Geschichte und Alterthumskunde überhaupt*, Breslau: Wilibald August Holäuer 1817 (*Hegel's Library*, 725).

other sacred texts. Chapter Three is dedicated to the deity Mithra, and Hegel sides with Rhode against Creuzer in a discussion about the mystery cults dedicated to this god, which Rhode claims is a later addition to Zoroastrianism, whereas Creuzer makes this cult a central element of this religion in its traditional form.³⁹ Of particular interest is Rhode's *Die heilige Sage und das gesammte Religionssystem der alten Baktrer, Meder und Perser oder des Zendvolks*, his *magnum opus* from 1820, for which he was awarded an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Jena.⁴⁰ Rhode is critical of Creuzer's methodology, which he believes confuses the different peoples and religions. Instead, he tries to achieve a more accurate picture of the ancient Persians and their beliefs by focusing on them alone in their specific historical and geographical situation.

Hegel also made use of the work of Othmar Frank (1770–1840), who was primarily a specialist in Sanskrit. After having studied oriental languages in Paris (where he met Franz Bopp) and in London, Frank became Professor of Philosophy in Bamberg, then Professor for Indian and Persian Languages in Würzburg in 1821, and then from 1826 Professor for Philosophy and Oriental Philology in Munich. He is often regarded as the forerunner of Bopp with his Sanskrit reader and grammar.⁴¹ In 1808 he published *Das Licht vom Orient*, the title of which is of course an allusion to Zoroastrianism. In this book Frank enthusiastically portrays Persia as the country where all human culture began, from which it subsequently dispersed to other places, such as India, China, Egypt, and Greece.⁴² He also connects ancient Persian culture with Germany, pointing to linguistic evidence that the German language is connected to Persian.⁴³ This is a rather ideological and even nationalistic work that aims at the creation of a scholarly society or academy dedicated to the study of ancient Persia. One year later he published his main work, *De Persidis. Lingua et Genio. Commentationes Phaesophico-Persicae*.⁴⁴ In contrast to *Das Licht vom Orient*, this text has a scholarly character and treats both the ancient Persian language and religion.

³⁹ See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 620; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 513. See Rhode, *Ueber Alter und Werth einiger morgenländischen Urkunden, in Beziehung auf Religion, Geschichte und Alterthumskunde überhaupt*, pp. 122f.

⁴⁰ Johann Gottlieb Rhode, *Die heilige Sage und das gesammte Religionssystem der alten Baktrer, Meder und Perser oder des Zendvolks*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Hermannschen Buchhandlung 1820.

⁴¹ Othmar Frank, *Chrestomathia Sanskrita*, vols 1–2, Munich: Typographice ac Litographice Opera et Sumtibus Propriis 1820–1. *Grammatica Sanskrita*, Würzburg: Typographice ac Litographice Sumtibus Propriis 1823.

⁴² Othmar Frank, *Das Licht vom Orient*, 1. Theil, Nürnberg: Lechner, Leipzig: Besson 1808 (see p. 4, p. 8).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4, p. 15, pp. 50ff.

⁴⁴ Othmar Frank, *De Persidis. Lingua et Genio. Commentationes Phaesophico-Persicae*, Nuremberg: Bibliopolio Steinio 1809 (*Hegel's Library*, 514).

6.2. LIGHT AND THE GOOD: ORMUZD

As usual, Hegel begins his analysis by trying to characterize the conception of the divine in this religion. He designates the divinity of Zoroastrianism as “the god of light.” He says by way of introduction, “This religion of light—or of what is immediately good—is the religion of the ancient Parsees, founded by Zoroaster.”⁴⁵ Given this conception of the divine, it makes sense that the Zoroastrians had fire temples and fire altars, where they worshiped this deity. Zoroastrianism belongs to “natural religion” in Hegel’s scheme since light is an object or product of nature. It is something external that is found in the world. Indeed, of the natural objects, it is one of the most basic.

The general conception of light is something fundamental, corresponding with the concept of pure being: “Zoroaster’s ‘light’ belongs to the world of consciousness—to Spirit as a relation to something distinct from itself.”⁴⁶ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel thus compares this conception of the divine explicitly with the first stage of “Consciousness,” which posited the concept of being.⁴⁷ Like the concept of pure being, the divine as light in Zoroastrianism can designate anything perceived directly by the senses, such as the specific light of a fire or a star, but it can also be something abstract, that is, the concept of light itself or that which all specific lights have in common. For Hegel, according to this view, god is the “universal object” of pure light.⁴⁸ The Zoroastrians “attained to the consciousness that absolute truth must have the form of universality—of unity. This universal, eternal, infinite essence is not recognized at first, as conditioned in any way; it is unlimited identity.”⁴⁹ The universal, like the concept of pure being has no determinate form.⁵⁰ Fire, for example, is not circumscribed by a specific shape but rather is constantly changing. But while there is constant change in the realm of sense, there is unity and continuity in the realm of thought.

The key here, according to Hegel, is that light must be conceived as a universal, that is, an object of thought. It is the universal light that is the divine and not the individual incarnations of it. He explains, implicitly contrasting Zoroastrianism with Hinduism: “But light is not a lama, a brahmin, a mountain, an animal—this or that particular existence—but sensuous

⁴⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 616, note 284; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 510, note 149–183. Cf. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 177; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 239. Cf. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 325; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 435.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 173; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 234. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 354; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 256.

⁴⁷ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 419; *Jub.* vol. 2, p. 528.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 419; *Jub.* vol. 2, p. 528.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 178; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 239.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 419; *Jub.* vol. 2, pp. 528f.: “This being which is filled with the notion of Spirit is, then, the ‘shape’ of the simple relation of Spirit to itself, or the ‘shape’ of ‘shapelessness.’ In virtue of this determination, this ‘shape’ is the pure, all-embracing and all-pervading essential light of sunrise, which preserves itself in its formless substantiality.”

universality itself, simple manifestation. The Persian religion is therefore no idol-worship; it does not adore individual natural objects, but the universal itself.⁵¹ One might also say that although the Zoroastrians worship the god of light, this is not the concrete light of the sun or the moon, and thus this deity is not like the Egyptian god of the sun, Ra (or Re), or the Greek goddess of the moon Selene, which are both too concrete. The focus is therefore on the universal and not the particular. It is more difficult to grasp a universal thought than an object of sense. The god at issue here makes possible the individual beings of creation upon which he shines light, but he remains detached from them. According to this view, the divine, so to speak, floats above the realm of finite creation.⁵² The god of Zoroastrianism cannot therefore be reduced to any specific natural form or concrete manifestation of light.

When the Zoroastrians worship their deity by means of altars with fire, this is not to be understood symbolically. The fire is not a symbol that refers to a god, but rather the fire is the actual presence of the divine.⁵³ Hegel explains:

The religion of Zoroaster, namely, takes *light* as it exists in nature—the sun, the stars, fire in its luminosity and flames—to be the Absolute, without explicitly separating this divinity from light, as if light were a mere expression and image or symbol. The Divine, the meaning, is not severed from its existence, from the lights.⁵⁴

It is this immediate focus on the object of nature, light, that, according to Hegel's hierarchy, keeps Zoroastrianism in the realm of the religions of nature. In later religions such as Greek polytheism the natural element is separated off from the divinity, which takes on a more anthropomorphic form. In these later religions the natural element is relegated to a symbol, but this has not happened yet in Zoroastrianism.

Belonging to the religions of transition between the religions of nature and those of spirit, Zoroastrianism still maintains certain elements of the former, while it struggles towards a higher conception of the divine. Specifically, Zoroastrianism begins with the worship of an object of nature, light. But then in the course of time this pure natural element comes to take on aspects that are relevant for the human sphere. Thus the transition from substance to subject begins. Hegel explains, "So the determinateness is not an empirical or manifold determinateness, but is itself what is pure, universal, and self-identical; it is a

⁵¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 178; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 239. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 355; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 256.

⁵² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 173; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 234: "We see in the Persian world a pure exalted unity, as the essence which leaves the special existences that inhere in it, free."

⁵³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 356; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 258: "This light is burned on their altars; it is not so much a symbol but rather the very presence of what is excellent and good. Everything good, noble, and excellent in the world is honored, loved, prayed to in this way; for it is counted as the Son, as the begotten one of Ormazd, in whom he loves himself, in whom he is well pleased."

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 325; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 435f.

determining of substance whereby it ceases to be substance—the unity that defines itself as subject. It has a content, and the fact that this content is what is determined by it and in conformity with it . . . is what is called the good or the true.”⁵⁵ With the predicates “the good” and “the true,” this conception of the divine extends beyond what is simply an object of nature. The principle of the good is reflected in finite natural entities such as trees and animals.⁵⁶ The understanding of nature as good is a celebration of life and creation in general. This positive value judgment about the realm of nature belongs to the human mind, the realm of spirit. It is not something immediately found in nature. Just as the natural element was not to be interpreted symbolically, so also this element of spirit is not symbolic.⁵⁷

A moral dimension is added to the conception of the divine since the understanding of God as pure light is intended not just as a natural phenomenon exclusively but also as a moral entity. Light is an image of goodness, and pure light means metaphorically that god is all good: “In the Persian principle this unity is manifested as light, which in this case is not simply light as such, the most universal physical element, but at the same time also *spiritual* purity—the good.”⁵⁸ Here Hegel presumably refers to the many rules and regulations concerning how to remain pure and how to eliminate impurity. These rules make up a large part of the *Vendidad* in the *Avesta*, where the god instructs Zoroaster in great detail on the ways in which one must maintain spiritual purity. This moral dimension clearly transcends the purely natural representation of god as light.

The divine conceived as light and as the good is personified in the form of the god whom Hegel refers to as Ormuzd:

Ormuzd is the Lord of Light, and he creates all that is beautiful and noble in the world, which is a kingdom of the sun. He is the excellent, the good, the positive in all natural and spiritual existence. Light is the *body of Ormuzd*; thence the worship of fire, because Ormuzd is present in all light; but he is not the sun or moon itself. In these the Persians venerate only the light, which is Ormuzd.⁵⁹

Thus the natural principle and the moral principle are blended together. Light and the good are one. Following Kleuker, Hegel uses the name “Ormuzd,” which is a transliteration from Middle Persian; other orthographical variants include “Hormazd” or “Hurmuz.” The original name in Avestan for the

⁵⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 610; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 504f. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 352ff.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 254ff.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 325; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 435. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 327; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 437. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 612; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 506.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 616, note 284; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 510f., note 149–83.

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 175; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 235. Cf. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 325; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 436.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 179; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 241. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 355; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 257.

personification of light and the good is Ahura Mazda. In the *Vendidad* from the *Avesta*, to which Hegel refers directly,⁶⁰ Zoroaster speaks with Ahura Mazda, questioning him about a number of things. Ahura Mazda is thus introduced as the creator and the main god of Zoroastrianism: the god of light and the good.

6.3. DARKNESS AND EVIL: AHRIMAN

According to Hegel's metaphysics, the concept of being cannot exist on its own but necessarily implies or contains its opposite, the concept of nothing. So also here the abstract concept of pure light cannot exist on its own. It necessarily implies its opposite, darkness.⁶¹ This *metaphysical* development from light to darkness also gives rise to a corresponding *moral* development from good to evil. Now since god as the good is posited, a principle of evil must also arise. In this way the original conception of god as light now dissolves into two competing conceptions, two gods with opposing principles: "Ormuzd is the Lord of the kingdom of light—of good; Ahriman that of darkness—of evil."⁶² These two principles are regarded as deriving from a higher more abstract one, "Zeruane-Akerene," which represents the universal, "the unlimited all."⁶³ Again following Kleuker, Hegel uses the name "Ahriman" for the evil spirit that is in constant battle against Ormuzd. "Ahriman" is the Middle Persian equivalent of "Angra Mainyu" in Avestan. He is a destructive force, associated with deception, death, and evil.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 179f.; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 241.

⁶¹ See *PhS*, p. 419; *Jub.* vol. 2, p. 529. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 174; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 234. Cf. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 325; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 436.

⁶² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 178; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 240. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 612; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 507. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 311; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 241. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 325; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 436.

⁶³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 178; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 240.

⁶⁴ One of Hegel's sources for this information is Plutarch's work *Isis and Osiris*, which we know he was familiar with from his study of the Egyptian religion. See *Isis and Osiris* in *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 46, pp. 111ff., 369e: "The great majority and the wisest of men hold this opinion: they believe that there are two gods, rivals as it were, the one the Artificer of good and the other of evil. There are also those who call the better one a god and the other a daemon, as, for example, Zoroaster the sage, who, they record, lived five thousand years before the time of the Trojan War. He called the one Oromazes [sc. Ormuzd] and the other Areimanius [sc. Ahriman]; and he further declared that among all the things perceptible to the senses, Oromazes may best be compared to light, and Areimanius, conversely, to darkness and ignorance, and midway between the two is Mithras; for this reason the Persians give to Mithras the name of 'Mediator.'" See also *ibid.*, vol. 5, Chapter 47, p. 113, 369f.: "Oromazes, born from the purest light, and Areimanius, born from the darkness, are constantly at war with each other." Hegel refers to this passage in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 83f.; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 116.

In Hegel's view, this dualism represents an advance over Hinduism. In the *Science of Logic* he outlines a couple of different conceptions of negation in connection with his analysis of the law of contradiction.⁶⁵ One of these is *Verschiedenheit*, that is, the kind of difference where the second term has no necessary relation to the first term. This is the conception of difference that says simply that everything is different from everything else: a tree is different from a star, and a desire is different from a picture, etc. With this conception of negation or difference there is no natural or obvious relation between the two terms. Any given thing can have this same indifferent relation to virtually every other thing. By contrast, the form of negation or difference that Hegel advocates as the speculative concept is that of *Gegensatz* or opposites. This conception states that a given thing is negated by one thing and only one thing, namely, its opposite: the negation of north is south, the negation of up is down, etc. This is the higher conception for Hegel since this leads to the speculative sublation of the individual concepts and unites them in a higher unity, for example, the unity of being and nothing in becoming. The conception of the divine as good as opposed to evil or light as opposed to darkness is a form of *Gegensatz*. The individual terms are opposites of one another. By contrast, the conception of the divine in Hinduism represents that of *Verschiedenheit*. There is no necessary relation between Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva; they are simply different from one another and not related in any necessary dialectical manner. Thus Zoroastrianism represents a conceptual advance on this point.

Despite its advance over Hinduism, the Zoroastrian conception of the divine nonetheless proves to be inadequate since it fails to see the conceptual unity that lies implicitly in opposites, where the one cannot exist without the other. The two principles are conceived as being absolutely different with nothing in common; evil is absolutely evil, and good absolutely good. The necessary conceptual relation between the two is overlooked: "Light is an infinite expansion, it is as rapid as thought; but in order that its manifestation be real, it must strike upon something that is dark. Nothing is made manifest by pure light; only in this Other does definite manifestation make its appearance, and with this, Good appears in opposition to Evil."⁶⁶ The failure to see the dialectical relation between good and evil, light and darkness, leads to an abstract one-sidedness, where each term is regarded on its own, in isolation and without relation to the other.

One might think that the division of the universal god into light and darkness, good and evil represents a form of determination. For Hegel,

⁶⁵ See Hegel, *SL*, pp. 439–43; *Jub.*, vol. 4, pp. 545–51. See also *SL*, pp. 413–16; *Jub.*, vol. 4, pp. 510–15. *SL*, pp. 438–9; *Jub.*, vol. 4, pp. 544–5. *EL*, § 119, Additions 1–2; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 276–80.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 302, note 281; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 509, note 119–48.

however, this is not the case. Since the Persians fail to see the conceptual connection between the opposites, they fail to sublimate them. He explains, "The deficiency in the Persian principle is only that the unity of the antithesis is not completely recognized; for in that indefinite conception of the uncreated all, whence Ormuzd and Ahriman proceeded, the unity is only the absolutely *primal* existence and does not reduce the contradictory elements to harmony itself."⁶⁷ This is an irresolvable dualism, and the dialectical relation of these concepts remains unrecognized. In other words, each principle exists on its own, and there is no realization that they both essentially belong together. Being stands opposed to nothing, and no further step is made to the mediation in becoming. In short, Zoroastrianism is stuck in a static dualism.

Hegel characterizes this dualistic conception negatively as abstraction since each element is abstracted from the other, although the other is necessary for it to receive its full meaning: "Because we still have the good in such an abstract way, it is still one-sided for us, still burdened with an antithesis to another, and this other or opposite is evil."⁶⁸ The good lacks a meaningful element of particularity or concretion. To say that Ormuzd is good does nothing to determine what the good is or concretely how one should act. Since this god remains abstract, he has no determinate content. He is just an empty name.⁶⁹ Hegel explains, "The determinations of this substance are only attributes which do not attain to self-subsistence, but remain merely names of the many-named One. This One is clothed with the manifold powers of existence and with the 'shapes' of reality as with an adornment that lacks a self."⁷⁰ Light is indeterminate: "Light makes no distinctions: the sun shines on the righteous and the unrighteous, on high and low, and confers on all the same benefit and prosperity."⁷¹ At first glance, one might think that Hegel's claim that the concept of the good as purely abstract and indeterminate is difficult to square with the texts of the *Avesta*. In the *Vendidad*, for example, Ormuzd gives Zoroaster a long list of highly concrete commands about what to do and what not to do. But Hegel's critical point is that good and evil must be conceived together and not in isolation. It is impossible to conceive of something as wholly good or wholly evil. This is what he means by abstraction.

Hegel characterizes the Zoroastrian conception of the good as weak or impotent since it cannot overcome or sublimate its opposite but must live in constant struggle with it: "The good is indeed the true and the powerful, but it

⁶⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 179; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 240.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 612; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 507.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 419; *Jub.* vol. 2, p. 529: "The content developed by this pure *being*, or the activity of its perceiving, is, therefore, an essenceless by-play in this substance which merely *ascends*, without *descending* into its depths to become a subject and through the self to consolidate its distinct moments."

⁷⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 419; *Jub.* vol. 2, p. 529.

⁷¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 174; *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 234.

is in conflict with evil so that evil stands over against it and persists as an absolute principle. Evil ought surely to be overcome, to be counterbalanced; but what ought to be is not.”⁷² The true conception of evil is that which is overcome by the good and is thus dialectically related to it. But Zoroastrianism still remains at a fairly low level of development since it is dualistic, with both a good and an evil deity. This means that the Persians have not yet reached the realization that spirit can overcome or is higher than nature. According to Hegel, the higher development (that we first see with the Egyptian religion) is the awareness that the good can and in fact does overcome evil and thus the dualism can be surmounted.

The thought here is that, according to Hegel, humans have a natural principle in themselves, and if they act in accordance with this, then they do evil. By contrast, humans also have a rational principle in themselves, and it is from this that we have ethics and social life. When humans act in accordance with this universal, then they do the good. Usually this is simply a matter of upbringing, when we as children learn to control and disregard our animal instincts and act in a rational manner. By the time we reach adulthood, we are more or less used to thinking in terms of rational principles and acting in accordance with them. But the Zoroastrian conception presents an entirely different view. Its view sees human beings still locked in a constant and equal struggle between good and evil. For Hegel, the Persians have not yet reached the stage where they see humans as having the ability to control their desires and thus overcome evil. This is represented in the dualistic conception of the divine that appears here. The principle of the good comes not from human beings themselves but rather from an external being. In short, human beings are not able to act in a morally correct fashion on their own. They need the assistance from the god outside of them, just as children, unable to control their own natural impulses, need the strict correction of a parent. Due to the lack of development of their subjective freedom, people constantly need external corrections, threats, and punitive measures for them to do the good. They cannot produce the good from within themselves.

Despite the fact that this conception of the divine represents an advance over the purely natural, it is still not wholly constituted by spirit. These conceptions of the divine still lack the fundamental development of subjective freedom and thus remain abstract in significant respects.⁷³ Ormuzd and Ahriman are deities who are still tied to nature and represented by natural elements: light and darkness. They are a reflection of a world of immediate desire and impulse that has not yet discovered the principle of subjective freedom. Given this shortcoming, Zoroastrianism finds itself at a transitional stage which has not yet reached the full development of spirit.

⁷² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 613; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 507.

⁷³ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 325; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 436.

6.4. THE LESSER DEITIES: THE AMESHA SPENTAS, FRAVASHIS, AND YAZATAS

While Ormuzd is the highest divinity, there are also lesser ones. Of these there is a group of six which occupies a special place. In the *Yasnas* (from the *Avesta*), these are referred to by the name of "Amesha Spentas" or "Holy Immortal Ones."⁷⁴ Hegel and other contemporary writers write this together as "Amshaspands." These deities are mentioned by the ancient authors Plutarch and Strabo.⁷⁵ Like Ormuzd, these gods are thought to help humans in their pursuit of the good. Each of them, together with Ormuzd, is responsible for the well-being of one of the seven realms of the earth. The six Amesha Spentas are the following: Vohu Manah is a male deity, who represents "Intelligence" or "Good Purpose"; he has the ability to discern good and evil and to act for the good. He is associated with different animals. Also a male deity, Asha Vahishta represents "Righteousness" or "Justice" and is associated with fire. The male deity Khshathra Vairya represents "Power" both inward and outward, that is, self-control and discipline over oneself and dominion in the world. He is associated with the sky and metals. Spenti Armaiti is a female deity who stands for "Holy Devotion" and "Obedience." She is also a fertility goddess and thus associated with the earth. Also a female deity, Haurvatat represents "Health" both physical and mental. Her domain is the sphere of the waters, which is also her symbol. The last of the Amesha Spentas is Ameretat, a female deity representing "Immortality." Her symbol is plants. These are the highest spiritual beings after Ormuzd and are thus sometimes referred to as archangels. Although Hegel does not go into an examination of each of these deities in detail, their representations as both objects of nature (earth, water, animals, plants, etc.) and as principles from the realm of spirit (intelligence, justice, devotion, etc.) support his view of Zoroastrianism as a transitional religion.

For Hegel, the Amesha Spentas are the concrete instantiations of the abstract concept of god in Ormuzd. As noted above, he is critical of the idea of Ormuzd as simply the concept of light or the concept of the good without any further determination. According to Hegel's metaphysics, the universal,

⁷⁴ See Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, pp. 21–5. Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 162–72. A.V. Williams Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies: The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs*, New York: Columbia University Press 1928, pp. 42–54.

⁷⁵ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 47, pp. 113ff., 370a: "Oromazes, born from the purest light, and Areimanius, born from the darkness, are constantly at war with each other; and Oromazes created six gods, the first Good Thought the second Truth, the third Order, and, of the rest, one of Wisdom, one of Wealth, and one of the Artificer of Pleasure in what is Honorable." Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, vols 1–8, trans. by Horace Leonard Jones, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann 1954–70 (*Loeb Classical Library*), vol. 7, pp. 175–9 (Book 15, 3, 13–16 (732–3)).

abstract entity must realize itself by making itself concrete as particular beings. On his own as universal, Ormuzd is indeterminate. Hegel writes, “this reeling, unconstrained life must determine itself as being-for-self and endow its vanishing ‘shapes’ with an enduring subsistence.”⁷⁶ Only by becoming a concrete entity in the world can Ormuzd be effectual in advancing the good.

Ormuzd represents the abstract notion of light, and the Amesha Spentas more concrete instances of it. Hegel thus explains these deities as further incarnations of the god of light: “Ormuzd is not limited to particular forms of existence. Sun, moon, and five other stars, which seem to indicate the planets—those illuminating and illuminated bodies—are the primary symbols of Ormuzd; the *Amshaspands*, his first sons.”⁷⁷ While Ormuzd represents the concept of light in general, as it were, the universal light, these other deities represent specific lights such as the prominent celestial bodies. He explains, “In the realm of Ormuzd it is the Amshaspands as the seven chief lights in heaven who enjoy divine worship first, because they are the essential particular existences of light and therefore, as a pure and great heavenly people, constitute the determinate being of the Divine itself.”⁷⁸ While Hegel focuses on the idea that the Amesha Spentas are objects of nature since they represent lights, his case is even stronger when one considers the more concrete aspects of nature, outlined above, that these deities represent individually (earth, water, animals, plants, etc.).

Ormuzd is a principle of nature, but he is also a personified entity, with whom Zoroaster speaks and from whom he receives instruction. So also the Amesha Spentas, while natural entities, are personified.⁷⁹ The Amesha Spentas help Ormuzd advance the good in their own way and in their own sphere. They are thus invoked and prayed to individually: “Each Amshaspand (Ormuzd too is of their company in this) has its days for presiding, blessing, and beneficence.”⁸⁰

Although deities of nature, the seven Amesha Spentas (which, as Hegel notes, include Ormuzd himself) were also thought to rule over human affairs, and here again we can see why Hegel places Zoroastrianism as a transitional religion; it contains elements of both the religions of nature and of the religions of spirit. Specifically, the Persian king is regarded as the ruler of the mundane sphere. But his rule is mirrored in heaven by the gods. The king is assisted by seven officials with different tasks. These officials reflect the seven Amesha Spentas: “The king was surrounded by seven magnates, too, who

⁷⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 420; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 529.

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 180; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 242. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 313; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 243f. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 327f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 261. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 356; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 258. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 617n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 511n.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 326; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 436f.

⁷⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 617, note 284; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 511, note 149–83.

⁸⁰ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 326; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 437.

formed his council, and were regarded as representatives of the Amshaspands, just as the king was thought of as the deputy of Ormuzd."⁸¹ Hegel's source for this might well have been Herder, who mentions this point in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.⁸²

Hegel also discusses the spirits known as the Fravashis (or Farohars).⁸³ These are beings who were created by Ormuzd and who struggled alongside him in the battle against Ahriman. They were created before the beginning of time and initially dwelled together with Ormuzd in heavenly bliss. When Ormuzd created human beings, he asked the Fravashis if they wished to stay in heaven with him or travel to earth in human form in order to fight against evil. The Fravashis agreed to the latter and thus abandoned the bliss and protection of heaven in order to perform their noble task. During their time on earth, they inhabit the human body. For their efforts they were promised eternal life in heaven afterwards. The Fravashis are conceived in some ways as guardian angels for human beings. They are essential for keeping people alive since they preserve the breath of life. The Farvardigan festival was considered a religious holiday, lasting several days, at which the Fravashis of dead relatives were honored. Hegel refers to the prayers used to invoke these deities.⁸⁴

Hegel takes the idea of the Fravashis to be a progressive element in the Persian religion since it is an indication of the importance of individuals beyond the merely physical body. He explains, "A distinction is posited in humanity too; something higher is distinguished from our immediate corporality, naturalness, and temporality, from the insignificance of our external being or finite existence. This higher aspect is represented by the genii, *Fravashis*."⁸⁵ With the doctrine of the Fravashis, the Persians recognize the idea of spirit, which transcends the physical body. Moreover, the idea that every human being has his or her own specific Fravashi is indication that each person has an intrinsic value. But the full realization of this has not yet occurred here since someone's Fravashi is still different from the person himself, although they inhabit the same body. Moreover, a Fravashi has come to the person, so to speak, from the outside, since it originally dwelt in heaven and only later came to the earth with its divine mission. So a Fravashi

⁸¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 617, note 284; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 511, note 149–83.

⁸² See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 81 (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 69): "As seven princes stood round the throne of the king, seven spirits stand before god, and execute his commands throughout the world." *Ideen*, vol. 3, p. 84 (*Outlines*, vol. 2, pp. 71f.): "Its seven amshaspands served no more, and the image of Ormuzd no longer sat on the Persian throne."

⁸³ See Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, p. 15, pp. 33–4, pp. 71–3, pp. 91–2, pp. 104–5. Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 375–8. Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies: The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs*, p. 22, pp. 59–60, pp. 112–13, pp. 123–8, p. 286.

⁸⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 356f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 258. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 314; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 244. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 620; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 513.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 620, note 289; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 513, note 199–202.

is not, so to speak, a natural part of a human being that arises from the person's development and character. Thus, the individual has not yet been conceived as absolute or good in his or her own right. What is absolute and good, the Fravashi, comes as something separate and external.

Hegel also mentions another class of lesser deities, which he refers to as the Izads, which is the Pahlavi version of the Avestan term "Yazata."⁸⁶ Literally the term means simply "worthy of worship," thus indicating a divinity. These are also benevolent entities under the rule of Ormuzd, sometimes referred to as angels. This is the most numerous class of deities. The *Yashts* are a series of twenty-one hymns in the *Avesta* dedicated to the main Yazatas. The Yazatas help human beings strive for the good, and human moral improvement is impossible without them. They also teach about important matters of religion. From them humans learn about Ormuzd and about how to get rid of demons. The Yazatas are quick to assist virtuous people but equally quick to abandon the sinful ones. They are offered special sacrifices of meat. Hegel mentions the Yazatas only briefly and in a general way, not examining their role or activity in any detail.⁸⁷

6.5. WORSHIP

In addition to the participation in seven annual festivals dedicated to the Amesha Spentas, Zoroastrianism dictates five daily prayers.⁸⁸ Hegel outlines in detail the importance of prayer to the different deities, beginning with Ormuzd:

Before everything else the Parsi has therefore to call on Ormuzd in thoughts and words, and to pray to him. After praising him from whom the whole world emanates, the Parsi must next turn in prayer to particular things according to their level of majesty, dignity, and perfection. . . . So prayer is directed first to the Amshaspands as the nearest antitypes of Ormuzd, as the first and most brilliant beings who surround his throne and further his dominion.⁸⁹

After directing prayers to Ormuzd and the Amesha Spentas, the Zoroastrians, according to Hegel's account, turn to give praise to the Fravashis.⁹⁰ Finally, the Zoroastrians sing the praises of natural things as the creations of Ormuzd.⁹¹ Hegel's analysis of the Zoroastrian prayers is presumably based

⁸⁶ See Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, pp. 21–2, p. 28, p. 56, p. 72, p. 149, p. 185, p. 198. Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 368–74. Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies: The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs*, pp. 55–66.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 326; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 437.

⁸⁸ See Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, pp. 30–8.

⁸⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 327; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 438f.

⁹⁰ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 328; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 439.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

on the above-mentioned *Yashts*. The first Yasht is a prayer to Ormuzd, and the following ones are addressed to the Amesha Spentas, collectively and individually. As Hegel indicates, there are also subsequent prayers to the Fravashis and to objects of nature such as the moon, the sun, and the stars Vega and Sirius.

Hegel also focuses on another aspect of Zoroastrian worship, namely, that of ethical action in the world. Zoroastrianism preaches a celebration of life.⁹² It encourages one to take joy in the pleasures and beauties of nature. One should strive for happiness in this world and communicate this to others. Zoroastrianism also focuses on freedom and responsibility. Each individual is born as a part of the realm of the good ruled by Ormuzd. But each person has the free will to choose good or evil. According to Hegel's understanding, the worship of the Zoroastrians consists primarily in honoring Ormuzd and the lesser deities and assisting them in the struggle against evil. This is the moral obligation that is placed on all human beings.

Over and above this praying, the *Zend-Avesta* insists on the actual practice of goodness and of purity in thought, word, and deed. The Parsi in the whole conduct of his inner and outer man should be as the light; [he should act] as Ormuzd, the Amshaspands, Izeds, Zoroaster and all good men live and work. This is because these live and have lived in the light, and their deeds are light; therefore every man must have their pattern in view and follow their example.⁹³

The worship of the Zoroastrians thus has an important and unmistakable moral dimension. Hegel emphasizes the role of the different deities as helping individuals achieve the good life. Just as the divine positive role models are personified with divinities that show the way to truth and justice, so also the negative is personified with Ahriman who corrupts, lies, and deceives. The ethical imperative dictates that "the whole of human life is consecrated" to overcoming Ahriman.⁹⁴ Hegel explains:

The task of every individual consists in nothing but his own spiritual and bodily purification, and in the spreading of this blessing and the struggle against Ahriman throughout human and natural situations and activities. Thus, the supreme, most sacred duty is to glorify Ormuzd in his creation, to love and venerate everything which has proceeded from this light and is pure in itself, and to make oneself pleasing to it.⁹⁵

The mention of "purification" again presumably refers to the many rules for such matters conveyed to Zoroaster by Ormuzd in the *Vendidad*. As is clear from this account, Zoroastrianism is not primarily a theoretical belief system

⁹² See Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 75–80. Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies: The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs*, pp. 132–42.

⁹³ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 328; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 439f.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 327; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 438.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

but rather a fundamentally practical one that enjoins the believer to action in the real world. While prayer plays an important role, it is in itself not enough since real action should follow.

The moral dimension of worship extends beyond the individual to one's life in the community and the state. Individuals are encouraged to participate fully in the different activities of human life and to practice charity towards those who are less fortunate. Hegel explains the duties of the follower of Zoroaster thus:

In this spirit he feeds the hungry, cares for the sick, to the thirsty he gives the refreshment of drink, to the traveler shelter and lodging; to the earth he gives pure seeds, he digs tidy canals, plants the deserts with trees and promotes growth wherever he can; he provides for the nourishment and fructifying of what lives, for the pure splendor of fire.⁹⁶

This practical and social dimension is in an important way different from Hinduism and Buddhism, where the goal was, on Hegel's interpretation, to separate oneself from the world. Zoroastrianism, by contrast, is against any form of monasticism, seclusion, or retirement from the life of the world. While the Hindus and the Buddhists aim at quietism, the Zoroastrians aim at action. The fight for the Good must take place in this world. Each individual is enjoined to help Ormuzd in the great struggle.

6.6. THE TRANSITION TO THE EGYPTIAN RELIGION

For Hegel, a serious defect with Zoroastrianism is that its conception of the divine remains abstract. While the notion of the Good or the True is thought to be seen in light and in concrete examples of it, this is an external relation and not a dialectical one. There is no necessary relation between the individual lights and the universal light. Hegel explains as follows:

The universal and the Divine does pervade the differences of particular mundane reality, but in this its particularized and separated existence there still remains subsistent the substantial and undivided unity of meaning and shape, and the differentiation of this unity has nothing to do with the difference between meaning as meaning and its manifestation, but only with the differentiation of existent objects, as, e.g., the stars, organic life, human dispositions and actions, in which the Divine, as light or darkness, is intuited as present.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 328; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 440. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 358; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 259. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 620f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 514.

⁹⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 329; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 440f.

Ormuzd or the Good is something external. It does not dwell in the world as a natural part of it, and for this reason its presence in the world can be challenged by the opposite principle. The Good has not yet become something internal to the human spirit itself.⁹⁸

Nonetheless Zoroastrianism marks an important step in the development of religious thinking, according to Hegel, and for this reason he places this religion as preparing the way for the religions of spirit. Specifically, light and fire are objects of nature, and therefore Zoroastrianism should, strictly speaking, belong to the religions of nature. However, these are not mere objects of nature, but rather they have a moral element associated with them, i.e., good and evil. This represents an aspect of the human spirit that is presented in the form of natural objects. For Hegel, this shows a dawning awareness of the importance of spirit vis-à-vis nature. However, this awareness has not yet been developed. Neither Ormuzd nor Ahriman is able to win the struggle, and this means that the ancient Persians regarded nature and spirit to be on equal terms, with neither side having the upper hand. Thus the Persians ended up in an unresolved dualism.

Interestingly, Hegel mentions the god Mithra, who is conceived as a mediating element between good and evil. But he claims that this is a later development in the Zoroastrian religion, which is at heart dualistic. The officials of the prince

are regarded as deputies of the planets and stars, the ministers and aides of Ormazd. One among them is Mithra, whom Herodotus already knows, the *μεσίτης*, or mediator. It is peculiar that Herodotus already singles him out; for in the religion of the Parsees the determination of mediation or reconciliation seems not yet to have been dominant. The worship of Mithra was developed generally only later on, when the need for reconciliation became stronger and more conscious, more vital and determinate in the human spirit.⁹⁹

So the cult of Mithra that can be found in the Roman world was a much later development that imposed an entirely new concept on an ancient religion: reconciliation and mediation. While it is true that Mithra was a god mentioned in the *Avesta*, originally one of the Yazatas, the later conceptions of him departed in important ways from the original Zoroastrian usage. Hegel's interpretation is supported by modern research, which goes so far as to characterize the cult of Mithra as a contamination of Zoroastrianism.¹⁰⁰

It is claimed in Zoroastrianism that good will eventually conquer evil and Ormuzd will defeat Ahriman. But, for Hegel, this is not ultimately satisfying to the religious believer since it means that god is not active and powerful in the

⁹⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 622; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 515.

⁹⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 619f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 513. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 330; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 442.

¹⁰⁰ See Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 302–8.

world here and now. Rather one must wait an indefinite period of time for this to happen:

Ormuzd always has Ahriman opposed to him. To be sure, the representation that in the end Ahriman will be overcome and Ormuzd alone will rule is maintained too, but it is not expressed as a present state, it is only something future. God, the essence or the spirit, must be present and contemporary, not relegated to the domain of imagination into the past or the future.¹⁰¹

The result of the movement of the divine into the indeterminate future is a form of religious alienation that separates the believer from God. This reduces the relation to the divine as an endless longing.

According to Hegel, it was only with the Egyptians that people began to realize for the first time that spirit is superior to nature and can vanquish it. Only with this realization can progress be made in the parallel conception of human beings and the divine. As will be seen in Chapter 7, the Egyptian gods Osiris and Seth initially represent a dualistic opposition of good and evil. But the Egyptian religion takes the next step of sublating this opposition into a higher unity.

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 622; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 515.

The Egyptian Religion

The Religion of Mystery

Hegel's account of the religion of ancient Egypt is among the most fascinating in his lectures.¹ He gives parallel treatments in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,² the *Lectures on Aesthetics*,³ and briefly in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁴ In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* he refers to the Egyptians' belief system as "The Religion of Mystery"⁵ or, with an alternative translation, "The Religion of the Enigma" (*Die Religion des Rätsels*).⁶ With this designation Hegel intends to emphasize the hidden or secret nature of much of the Egyptian religion. In his last series of lectures from 1831 he changes this to "The Religion of Ferment."⁷ This is perhaps related to the characterization that he gave many years earlier in the *Phenomenology*, where he refers to this stage in the development of spirit as "The Artificer" (*Der Werkmeister*),⁸ thus focusing on the impressive buildings and constructions that are often associated with ancient Egyptian culture—an aspect that also plays a central role in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

Despite these many treatments, Hegel's analysis of the Egyptian religion has been a generally neglected topic in mainstream Hegel studies. The reason for this is presumably the fact that it is regarded as being of rather peripheral relevance for the central issues that are commonly associated with his

¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 358–81; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 259–81. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 625–39; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 518–32. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 744–7; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 629–31. *NR*, pp. 200–34. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 85–122; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 437–72.

² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 198–222; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 264–90. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 334–70; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 268–314. *OW*, pp. 460–514.

³ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 347–61; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 463–81. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, pp. 640–59; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 279–302. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, pp. 779–84; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 451–7.

⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 421–4; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 531–5.

⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 85; *Jub.*, vol. 15, p. 437.

⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 358; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 259. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 365; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 265.

⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 744–7; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 629–31.

⁸ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 421; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 531. See *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 359; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 300: "So the Egyptian spirit is this laborer, and this is the principal feature of Egypt as such."

philosophy. However, a closer look reveals that his accounts of the Egyptian cult of the dead shed light on one of the seminal issues in the development of the Hegel schools in the 1830s and '40s, namely, the question of whether he had a theory of immortality. Hegel's positive assessment of the Egyptian belief in immortality affords valuable insight into the nature of Hegel's own thought on this issue. This chapter will argue that this analysis reveals that Hegel did in fact have a theory of immortality, albeit an unorthodox one, that constitutes an important part of his overarching theory of the development of subjective freedom.

7.1. THE BIRTH OF EGYPTOLOGY

Modern Egyptology was only in its infancy when Hegel was lecturing on religion in the 1820s. Being keenly interested in the new wave of European Orientalism, he took pains to keep abreast of every new development and discovery. The field of Egyptology as a scholarly discipline began in connection with France's imperial ambitions, when Napoleon launched his ill-starred Egyptian Campaign, which lasted from 1798–1801.⁹ A child of the Revolution, Napoleon was an avid believer in science and a critic of traditional religion. For the expedition he enlisted the service of an impressive cadre of scholars and scientists, which he organized under the title of the Institut d'Égypte.¹⁰ They became increasingly fascinated by the magnificent ruins that they saw and took every opportunity to study these mysterious ancient structures and works of art. In addition, they had some of them packed up and planned to ship them back to Paris. Although Napoleon abandoned his army after one year (on August 22, 1799) in order to sail secretly back to France and stage a *coup d'état*, his scholars, with only a few exceptions, were left behind with the army for another two years. There they continued their research and studies. The Institut had a journal called *La Décade Égyptienne*, which it published in Cairo during the entire period from 1798–1800.¹¹ After the French defeat, when the scholars were finally able to return to France, they were obliged, as

⁹ See *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation, 1798*, trans. by Shmuel Moreh, introduction by Robert L. Tignor, Princeton and New York: M. Wiener 1993. J. Christopher Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, London: Hamish Hamilton 1962. Paul Strathern, *Napoleon in Egypt*, London: Jonathan Cape 2007. Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007.

¹⁰ See Paul Strathern, "The Institute of Egypt," in his *Napoleon in Egypt*, pp. 191–203. Christopher Herold, "The Institute and El Azhar," in his *Bonaparte in Egypt*, pp. 164–200. Nina Burleigh, *Mirage: Napoleon's Scientists and the Unveiling of Egypt*, New York: Harper-Collins 2007.

¹¹ *La Décade Égyptienne, journal littéraire et d'économie politique*, Cairo: De l'Imprimerie Nationale 1798–1800 (vol. 1, 1798–9; vol. 2, 1799–1800).

a part of the terms of their surrender, to hand over their most spectacular finds to the British.¹²

After their return to France, Napoleon's Egyptian scholars continued to meet regularly and discuss their findings. Clearly the most tangible result of their collective efforts was the production of the multi-volume *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–22), which forms the basis of modern Egyptology.¹³ This massive collaborative undertaking included the works of scientists, artists, historians, and archeologists, and attempted to give a systematic overview of all that was known about Egypt in the different fields. It included numerous volumes full of detailed paintings and drawings, illustrating various aspects of Egyptian art and nature.

The publication of this work helped to fuel the rapid rise of interest among Europeans for all things Egyptian, thus initiating a period of Egyptomania. In a brief period of time the beauty and mystery of ancient Egypt captured the European imagination. Adventurers, wealthy estate owners, colonial administrators, and others rushed to collect artifacts for their museums and private collections. Egyptian styles were imitated in European furniture, jewelry, and architecture.¹⁴ Egyptian motifs, places, and characters began appearing in European literature.

Hegel's account of the ancient Egyptian religion in the *Phenomenology* appeared only some six years after Napoleon's expedition, and his Berlin lectures only two decades after, at a time when the second supplemented edition of the *Description de l'Égypte* was still being published. Hegel refers to this in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* from 1822–3: "Recently, over the past twenty-five years, the French have brought the land to light and opened it up anew for us, and new descriptions are continually forthcoming."¹⁵ From this comment it seems clear that Hegel was following the publication of the series rather intently.

¹² See Burleigh, *Mirage: Napoleon's Scientists and the Unveiling of Egypt*, pp. 209ff., pp. 215–18.

¹³ *Description de l'Égypte, ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française*, Books 1–23, Paris: L'Imprimerie Imperiale 1809–22. In addition to the volumes of text, this work included several volumes of beautiful plates with illustrations. A second edition consisting of thirty-seven volumes or books was published between 1821 and 1829. See Burleigh, *Mirage: Napoleon's Scientists and the Unveiling of Egypt*, pp. 221–5.

¹⁴ See Burleigh, *Mirage: Napoleon's Scientists and the Unveiling of Egypt*, pp. 242ff.

¹⁵ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 335; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 269. In *LPWH* (and *VPWG*) this allusion has been incorrectly identified as referring to Champollion's work *L'Égypte sous les Pharaons*, vols 1–2, Paris: De Bure frères 1814. This is of course a reference to the *Description de l'Égypte*, which had been appearing since 1809. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 644; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 283: "In the first place, as regards the Egyptian temple-precincts, the fundamental character of this huge architecture has been made familiar to us recently principally by French scholars."

Hegel's other sources of knowledge about ancient Egypt were varied and surprisingly extensive.¹⁶ While he clearly knew rather a lot about the incipient field of modern Egyptology, he also drew on the ancient writers Herodotus, Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch, Pliny the Elder, Strabo, and Josephus—a fact which he himself freely acknowledges.¹⁷ Of these authors, he especially singles out Herodotus, who visited the country and studied it first-hand. Herodotus' treatment of Egyptian culture and religion appears in Book II of his *Histories*.¹⁸ Diodorus of Sicily also was a first-hand witness, visiting Egypt in around 60 BC. Hegel further mentions ancient philosophical views about the Egyptian religion such as those of the neoPlatonists,¹⁹ referring explicitly to Iamblichus.²⁰

With regard to modern research, Hegel refers to the work on the Egyptian hieroglyphics of Thomas Young (1773–1829)²¹ and Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832).²² On this same topic he owned a copy of James Browne's (1793–1841) *Aperçu sur les hiéroglyphes d'Égypte et les progrès faits jusqu'à présent dans leurs déchiffrement* from 1827, which constituted an overview of the literature on the subject.²³ Also in the genre of hieroglyphics research was the work of Hegel's colleague in Berlin, Johann Joachim Bellermann (1754–1842), entitled *Über die Scarabäen-Gemmen, nebst Versuchen, die darauf befindlichen Hieroglyphen zu erklären*.²⁴

One important source of inspiration for Hegel was once again Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker*.²⁵ While Creuzer's work is concerned with interpreting mythology in general and is not specifically dedicated to a study of Egyptian religion, nonetheless the latter does play an important

¹⁶ For Hegel's sources see the "Editorial Introduction" in *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 8–9, pp. 15–17, pp. 41–4, pp. 65–8, p. 78.

¹⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 200; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 266: "we must for the most part have recourse to the notices of the ancients . . ."

¹⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 199; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 265: "Egypt was always the land of marvels and has remained so to the present day. It is from the Greeks especially that we get information respecting it, and chiefly from Herodotus."

¹⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 208; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 276.

²⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 210; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 279. In the same passage Hegel also refers to the Greek astronomer and mathematician Eratosthenes' lost work *Hermes*. With regard to the connection to neoPlatonism, one might suspect the influence of Creuzer, who was a specialist in this area.

²¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 200; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 266.

²² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 200; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 267.

²³ [James] Brown[e], *Aperçu sur les hiéroglyphes d'Égypte et les progrès faits jusqu'à présent dans leur déchiffrement*, traduit de l'anglais, Paris: Ponthieu et Compagnie 1827 (*Hegel's Library*, 649).

²⁴ Johann Joachim Bellermann, *Über die Scarabäen-Gemmen, nebst Versuchen, die darauf befindlichen Hieroglyphen zu erklären*, vols 1–2, Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung 1820–1 (*Hegel's Library*, 640–1).

²⁵ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1810–12. (See also Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, 2nd fully revised edition, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819–21.)

part in the investigation. Hegel is indebted to Creuzer for his understanding of the Egyptian religion and culture as primarily symbolic. The Egyptian works of art and other cultural artifacts are not clear, transparent, or immediately comprehensible but rather use enigmatic symbols to refer to something else beyond themselves.

Hegel also used the works of his colleague, the art historian and archaeologist, Aloys Hirt (1759–1837), who was a great lover of Egyptian culture, which, he believed, formed the trunk of the tree from which the culture of other peoples branched out.²⁶ Hegel owned a copy of Hirt's *Die Baukunst nach den Grundsätzen der Alten* from 1809, a work which treats primarily Greek and Roman architecture.²⁷ Hirt published a three-volume standard work on architecture, entitled *Geschichte der Baukunst bei den Alten*,²⁸ which Hegel refers to frequently in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.²⁹ The first volume of Hirt's text from 1821 was useful to Hegel since it is clearly an important source of information for his understanding of, for example, the pyramids, obelisks, temples, and other impressive structures and monuments that he takes to be so important for an understanding the Egyptian religion. Also of particular use to Hegel was Hirt's *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*.³⁰ In this work Hirt gives profiles of the leading Egyptian deities based primarily on Herodotus' accounts. The book contains a series of eleven illustrated plates that the author uses to analyze the depictions of these deities in surviving Egyptian art.³¹ Hegel's interest in this work is attested to by the notes he took on it while reading.³²

An important source for Hegel's information about Egyptian art was Johann Joachim Winckelmann's (1717–68) *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, which was published in 1764 with a posthumous second edition following in 1776.³³ This book had received great acclaim and was already an established standard work in the field by Hegel's time. Hegel refers to

²⁶ See A[loys] Hirt, *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*, Berlin: G. Reimer 1821, p. 4.

²⁷ See A[loys] Hirt, *Die Baukunst nach den Grundsätzen der Alten*, Berlin: In der Realschulbuchhandlung 1809 (Hegel's Library, 609).

²⁸ A[loys] Hirt, *Geschichte der Baukunst bei den Alten*, vols 1–3, Berlin: G. Reimer 1821–7.

²⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 631; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 267. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 643; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 282. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 647; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 287. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 653; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 294. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 663; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 307. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 671; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 316. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, pp. 675–81 passim; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 321–8 passim. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 17–20; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 40–3.

³⁰ A[loys] Hirt, *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*, Berlin: G. Reimer 1821.

³¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 6f.

³² See Helmut Schneider, "Hegel und die ägyptischen Götter. Ein Exzerpt," *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 16, 1981, pp. 56–68. Hoffmeister prints some of these reading notes in his edition of Hegel's *Berliner Schriften: 1818–1831*, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister, Hamburg: Meiner 1956, pp. 707–8.

³³ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vols 1–2, Dresden: In der Waltherischen Hof-Buchhandlung 1764.

this text in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.³⁴ In the initial volume of this work Winckelmann dedicates the first part of the second chapter to the art of the ancient Egyptians.³⁵ Here the author gives descriptions of the Egyptian sculptures and monuments, including accounts of the Egyptian gods, such as Isis, based on ancient sources and on Egyptian works of art that he saw in Italy.

Hegel also seems to have been influenced by some aspects of Herder's brief account of the Egyptians in *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.³⁶ One can detect in Hegel's analysis, for example, elements of Herder's understanding of the hieroglyphics. Moreover, Herder anticipates Hegel's focus on the Egyptians as a culture full of hiddenness and mystery; the Egyptians present to themselves images that demand but yet forbid explanation. Like Hegel, Herder characterizes the Egyptians as builders, whose relentless urge to construct constitutes a part of their belief system. Finally, Herder shares with Hegel a fascination for the sphinx as a telling symbol of Egyptian culture.

It would, however, be a mistake to think that Hegel's familiarity with ancient Egyptian culture consisted exclusively of book knowledge or descriptions of others. In 1823 the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770–1840), ordered work to begin on a great museum in Berlin, which would be called the Königlich Museum (known today as the Altes Museum on Museum Island in Berlin, just across the street from Hegel's old residence at Am Kupfergraben 4a). With these plans in mind, the King acquired a formidable collection of Egyptian relics from Johann Heinrich Minutoli (1772–1846),³⁷ a Prussian general who had been sent to Egypt by the king in 1820–1. Minutoli collected a large number of antiquities which he sent back to Berlin. Unfortunately, many of these were lost when the ship that was carrying them sank. However, the crates that were sent overland did arrive in Berlin in 1822. In 1823 the art historian Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794–1868) was appointed to set up the Royal Museum of Egyptology (today the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung). In a letter to Waagen from April 2, 1823 Hegel tells of an opportunity to see the collection on the next day (presumably at the Royal Estate Monbijou, where it was being kept while the museum was being built).³⁸ He invites Waagen to accompany him in the hope of being

³⁴ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 63. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, pp. 781f.

³⁵ Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vol. 1, pp. 31–68.

³⁶ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vols 1–4, Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1784–91, vol. 3, pp. 109–20. (English translation: *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vols 1–2, trans. by T. Churchill, 2nd ed., London: J. Johnson 1803, pp. 96–106.)

³⁷ See Otto Pöggeler, "Sehen und Begreifen: Ägyptische Kunst in der Sammlung Minutoli," in *Hegel in Berlin*, ed. by Otto Pöggeler et al., Berlin: Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz 1981, pp. 205–11.

³⁸ Hegel, *Letters*, p. 373; *Briefe*, vol. 3, letter 446, p. 5: "I am sorry, dear friend, not to be able to see you this evening at my home. Tomorrow morning, however, I am promised a chance to see the Egyptian antiquities of General von Minutoli. I have arranged to extend the permission to

able to learn something from his colleague's expertise in the field of ancient Egyptian art. In a letter to Creuzer dated May 6, 1823, Hegel can hardly control his excitement at having seen the collection:

It has now been decided to build our big museum. It will begin this spring. The King has earmarked 100,000 thalers for it. In recent days I have gone through General Minutoli's collection of Egyptian pieces, which the King has now acquired for 22,000 thalers in gold. I wished you had been there. There were most beautiful mummies, dozens of idols a foot and a half high, hundreds of smaller ones, including thirty in wax a finger's length—the remaining ones of porcelain, clay, wood, especially bronze, and so on.³⁹

Thus Hegel in fact saw quite a number of genuine Egyptian antiquities first-hand and had the opportunity to examine them. This experience clearly made a profound impression on him.

An account of Minutoli's expedition was published in 1825 under the somewhat cumbersome title, *Reisen zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon in der libyschen Wüste und nach Ober-Aegypten in den Jahren 1820 und 1821 von Heinrich Freih. v. Minutoli*.⁴⁰ This work features primarily the General's personal travel diary, which was edited by Hegel's colleague, the professor of art history Ernst Heinrich Toelken (1786–1869). Hegel was presumably familiar with this work since he owned a copy of the accompanying volume *Erklärung der Bildwerke am Tempel des Jupiter Ammon zu Siwah*, which was published two years earlier in 1823.⁴¹ This work, which was written by Toelken, contains his explanations of some of the monuments and works of art seen on the expedition, and herein one can immediately see its interest for Hegel.

7.2. OSIRIS AND SETH

With regard to the Egyptian deities, Hegel focuses on Osiris, whom he takes to be of central importance. The worship of Osiris took place over several centuries, and there is a great degree of variation in the myths about him.

you as well. If you feel like coming along, kindly be here tomorrow morning [Saturday] before 11:00 a.m. As for myself, I at once look forward to drawing instruction from seeing the collection under your guidance."

³⁹ Hegel, *Letters*, p. 370; *Briefe*, vol. 4.1, letter 450a, p. 48.

⁴⁰ *Reisen zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon in der libyschen Wüste und nach Ober-Aegypten in den Jahren 1820 und 1821 von Heinrich Freih. v. Minutoli. Nach den Tagebüchern desselben herausgegeben von Dr. E.H. Toelken. Im Auszug mitgeteilt von August Rücker*, Berlin: Rücker 1825.

⁴¹ Ernst Heinrich Toelken, *Erklärung der Bildwerke am Tempel des Jupiter Ammon zu Siwah*, Berlin: Rücker 1823 (*Hegel's Library*, 622).

There are brief accounts of his story in Herodotus⁴² and Diodorus of Sicily,⁴³ but the most detailed version of it, which clearly constitutes Hegel's main source, is found in Plutarch's work *Isis and Osiris*, which forms a part of the *Moralia*.⁴⁴ The story is also recounted in Hirt's *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*,⁴⁵ Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker*,⁴⁶ and descriptions of its main figures are given in Toelken's *Erklärung der Bildwerke am Tempel des Jupiter Ammon zu Siwah*.⁴⁷

Plutarch tells how Osiris was a benevolent and powerful early king of Egypt, who brought civilization to the world,⁴⁸ and whose reign was regarded as a kind of Egyptian golden age. Osiris' popularity and success incited the envy of his brother Seth, who wished to usurp his throne. (Following Plutarch and the Greek tradition, Hegel refers to Seth as Typhon.)⁴⁹ Unlike his brother Osiris, who is portrayed in human form, Seth has a human body but the long snout of an animal and odd protruding ears.⁵⁰ While Osiris represents civilization, Seth is associated with chaos, violence, and destruction, in particular, the hostile elements of the desert. Plutarch recounts how Seth tricked his brother into entering a specially crafted box that was made to fit him. Then with the help of numerous fellow conspirators, Seth locked him inside the box, which he then

⁴² Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by Aubrey de Sélincourt, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1954, p. 187.

⁴³ *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian*, vols 1–2, trans. by G. Booth, London: J. Davis 1814, vol. 1, p. 27 (Chapter 2).

⁴⁴ *Plutarchi Chaeronensis quae supersunt Omnia, cum adnotationibus variorum adjectaque lectionis diversitate Opera*, vols 1–14, ed. by J.G. Hutten, Tübingen: J.G. Cotta 1791–1804 (*Hegel's Library*, 470–83). See *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vols 1–16, trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt, London: William Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1936 (*Loeb Classical Library*), vol. 5, pp. 7–191; for the story about the murder of Osiris by Seth, see Chapter 13ff, pp. 35ff., 356a and ff. For modern accounts of this myth see Geraldine Pinch, "Plutarch's Osiris" in her *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods and Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 41–2; see also pp. 178–80. R.T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames and Hudson 1959, Chapters 3–5. J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris*, Berlin: Verlag Bruno Hessling 1966. Eberhard Otto, *Osiris und Amun. Kult und heilige Stätten*, Munich: Hirmer Verlag 1966.

⁴⁵ Hirt, *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*, pp. 35–41 (Osiris), pp. 41–5 (Isis), and pp. 51–5 (Seth).

⁴⁶ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, 2nd fully revised edition, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819–21, vol. 1, pp. 258–340.

⁴⁷ Toelken, *Erklärung der Bildwerke am Tempel des Jupiter Ammon zu Siwah*, p. 108, pp. 128ff., p. 140, p. 144, p. 149, pp. 152f., p. 155.

⁴⁸ *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 13, p. 35, 356a–b.

⁴⁹ Both Herodotus and Plutarch associate Seth with the Greek monster Typhon. See Herodotus, *The Histories*, p. 147. *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 41, p. 101, 367d, Chapter 49, p. 121, 371b, Chapter 62, p. 147, 376b.

⁵⁰ See Pinch, "Seth" in her *Egyptian Mythology*, pp. 191–4. J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth from Egyptian and Classical Sources*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1960. H. te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of His Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1967.

cast into the river. The chest washed up on shore and soon became overgrown in a patch of heather. The local king, pleased with the heather, cut off a large portion of it, including the chest, and made it into a pillar in his house.⁵¹ After a long search, Isis, the sister and wife of Osiris, ultimately found and recovered the box. She put it in a safe place so that Osiris could be properly honored. However, Seth discovered the box and removed the body, cutting it into several pieces and strewing it throughout Egypt. Isis was then left to seek the scattered parts individually, creating a temple for Osiris on the spot each time a piece was found.⁵² The final part of the story is that later Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, avenged his father and defeated Seth, but spared his life.

Hegel is particularly interested in what happens to Osiris. Once the pieces of his mutilated body were reassembled, Osiris was born again and became the king of the realm of the dead, known among the Egyptians as Amenthes.⁵³ At first glance Osiris and Seth seem to be regarded as opposed in a way that is similar to Ormuzd and Ahriman in Zoroastrianism. While Osiris represents water and moisture, an all-important element in the desert, Seth represents the opposite, the lack of water.⁵⁴ Thus to say that Osiris has been taken away means that it is the time of the drought; and to say that he has returned means that the rains and the water have returned.⁵⁵ While it appears that these two deities represent a static dualism, there is more to this relation than simple opposition.

Hegel believes that this view of conquering nature by overcoming death represents an improvement over previous religions. Specifically, in Hinduism, the third stage of the Trimurti was Shiva, who represented the constant cycle of creation and destruction over and over again endlessly. For Hegel, this is the bad infinity that displays no dialectical development. Likewise, in the Persian religion light and darkness, good and evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman were juxtaposed as static opposition. They were locked in an endless epic struggle, with neither side being able to gain the upper hand. This too represents the bad infinity since the two terms simply alternate with no speculative development taking place. Plutarch uses precisely this same example of Ormuzd and Ahriman to illustrate the dualism that explains the origin of good and evil since each principle is represented by its own divinity.⁵⁶ Indeed, Plutarch goes through the different philosophical schools, which argue that good and evil are mixed with one another and that it is impossible to eliminate evil completely

⁵¹ *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 15, pp. 39ff., 357a and ff.

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 5, Chapter 18, p. 45, 358a-b.

⁵³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 626f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 519.

⁵⁴ *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 39, p. 95, 366c-d.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 346; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 283.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, Chapters 46-7, pp. 111f., 369e-70b.

since it constitutes a part of the whole.⁵⁷ Plutarch then goes on to juxtapose Osiris and Seth on this point. This was perhaps part of the inspiration for Hegel's understanding of the relation of Osiris and Seth as representing something higher than the previous forms of dualism in the other religions.

Now with Osiris a genuine dialectical development occurs. At first Osiris is confronted with Seth, just as Ormuzd, the principle of the good, is confronted with Ahriman, the principle of evil. Osiris is killed, but he overcomes this and is born again, symbolizing a higher development. Finally, the undialectical cycle of back and forth between two terms is broken. Now evil is finally defeated. Hegel explains this in his own language by saying Osiris "has opposed to him (as his enemy) the negation as external or other, as Typhon [sc. Seth]. But the negation does not remain thus external to him, so that he would only abide in struggle, as in the case of Ormazd; instead, the negation enters into the subject itself."⁵⁸ According to Hegel, the dialectic follows three steps: first, something is posited, then it is negated, and then this negation is negated. Hinduism and Zoroastrianism stop after the second stage: something is posited, and then negated, and this cycle simply continues forever. There is an eternal conflict between the two competing principles since neither can gain the upper hand. Now with the Egyptians the third stage is introduced with the resurrection of Osiris:

negation is posited along with negation, so that death is slain and the evil principle vanquished. In the Persian religion it is not vanquished, for the good, Ormazd, remains standing opposite the evil one, Ahriman, and has not yet returned to self in this way. Here for the first time the vanquished state of the evil principle is posited.⁵⁹

The negation of the negation represents a true speculative development since it posits a third thing which is conceptually higher than the previous two principles.

While in Zoroastrianism the forces of good and evil were conceived as being independent entities radically separated from each other, the key to understanding the symbolic meaning of Osiris' overcoming of evil and death is to see that this external relation has shifted to an internal one. This mirrors human development in the sense that when humans are young, they have natural desires, drives and will, which must be educated. While children have an immediate desire to do something, they are constantly told by their

⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. 5, Chapter 49, p. 121, 371b: "The fact is that the creation and constitution of this world is complex, resulting, as it does, from opposing influences, which, however, are not of equal strength, but the predominance rests with the better. Yet it is impossible for the bad to be completely eradicated, since it is innate, in large amount, in the body and likewise in the soul of the universe, and is always fighting a hard fight against the better."

⁵⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 626; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 519.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 368; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 269.

parents, teachers and others that they should not do so. At this initial phase something external is needed to curb what is natural; it can only be conquered by force. These external forces “negate” the immediate drives and desires. But through the process of education, we come to internalize this external voice of our parents and teachers and to regulate our own behavior. In the language of psychoanalysis, we develop a superego or a conscience which controls our irrational drives and desires. We still have certain natural desires and drives, but we learn to control them ourselves. The “negation” thus becomes internal. In this sense the forces of good and evil or spirit and nature are no longer two external entities; rather, they both appear in a single human being. In the mature human being, one still has natural drives and desires, but they have been overcome by education. “The independent is what is not in antithesis but overcomes it. It does not set something finite over against itself but has the antithesis within itself and by the same token has overcome them.”⁶⁰ This internalization and overcoming of nature represent an important step in the maturation of the human spirit. Human beings are no longer simply steered by their immediate drives and desires. This is represented symbolically by the figure of Osiris who overcomes death, that is, nature. So initially the uncultivated drives and desires are positive. But then they are negated by an external entity. Then this negation is overcome when it is internalized, and the person is able to regulate his own desires. This is the negation of the negation. Only when this process has occurred can truly mature human life be thought to begin and subjective freedom be realized.

Osiris represents the world of spirit and civilization in contrast to nature. Hegel refers to the following passage from Plutarch: “One of the first acts related of Osiris in his reign was to deliver the Egyptians from their destitute and brutish manner of living. This he did by showing them the fruits of cultivation, by giving them laws, and by teaching them to honor the gods. Later he traveled over the whole earth civilizing it . . .”⁶¹ In the same passage Plutarch ascribes the invention of song and music to Osiris, and Hegel draws on this.⁶² With law, marriage, agriculture, and the arts, the human mind takes certain natural things and appropriates them in its own special way. It does not leave nature alone but rather reshapes it in accordance with the human mind. So also Osiris represents this advance. He forges civilization out of nature.

According to Hegel, the Egyptians were the first people to arrive at an incipient conception of human subjectivity. The figure of Osiris represents an awareness of something enduring in the human subject that is higher than

⁶⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 628; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 520.

⁶¹ *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 13, p. 35, 356a-b.

⁶² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 208f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 277. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 359; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 478. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 348; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 285. See also Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vol. 1, p. 259.

simply the physical body. The destiny of human beings is to overcome their natural state and act as free, rational agents. This new conception of individuality is reflected in a new development in the social order. Hegel compares the Egyptians favorably to the Indians. He begins by noting, "The Egyptians were, like the Hindus, divided into castes, and the children always continued the trade and business of their parents."⁶³ According to Hegel, the caste system in India was rigid and unbending, thus having a detrimental effect on the development of individual freedom. By contrast, "the hereditary transmission of occupations did not produce the same disadvantageous results in the character of the Egyptians as in India."⁶⁴ The reason for this is that the classes were not determined so rigidly, and thus there was more social mobility and leeway for the development of the individual and personal choice. So here again it is clear that, according to Hegel's system, the Egyptians' conception of the self was further developed than that of the Indians. There were social classes, but they were not regarded as fixed facts of nature that determined all aspects of human life and activity. This will be further developed in the direction of freedom by the Greeks.⁶⁵

Only when the Egyptians attain to a conception of themselves as intrinsically worthy and valuable can they arrive at a conception of immortality; this is transferred to their mythology. The truth of the divine is the truth of the individual consciousness. For Hegel, this marks a major step in the development of both human and religious thinking. The concept and nature of immortality are important criteria that Hegel uses to place the different religions in the hierarchical scheme that he develops. Accordingly, the more developed the conception of the individual and subjective freedom, the more developed the conception of immortality and thus the higher the placement of the religion in the economy of religious consciousness. The key here is once again that the conception of the divine is determined by the collective self-conception of the people. The myth of Osiris contains the key truth about the Egyptian conception of the self and consequently of immortality.

7.3. THE EGYPTIAN CULT OF IMMORTALITY

The story of Osiris' rebirth is not merely an interesting myth about a specific individual, but rather it opens up into a full-blown theory of immortality, not

⁶³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 204; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 271. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 341; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 276f.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 204; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 271.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 206; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 251: "in Egypt and in Asia exclusiveness and priestly influence have their home, but Greece, in its freedom, could not let the Eastern separation of caste exist."

just for kings or special people but for everyone.⁶⁶ Hegel believes that this represents a key feature in the Egyptian belief system that sets it above the other religions examined previously. He repeatedly refers to Herodotus' claim that the Egyptians were the first to develop a theory of the immortality of the soul.⁶⁷ Hegel regards this as a major breakthrough in the development of religious consciousness. The notion of immortality implies a heightened sense of the dignity and value of the individual. The key to the notion of immortality is the idea that life has overcome death or spirit has overcome nature, in short that the original opposition is sublated. The previous religions recognized nature as something that dominated spirit and for this reason constituted what was highest, and therefore the divine was conceived in terms of objects of nature. Here, by contrast, spirit is, for the first time, conceived as higher than nature. By overcoming death, spirit demonstrates its superiority over the purely natural sphere.

Hegel acknowledges that there were conceptions of immortality in previous religions but none of them recognized the individual as something substantial. Again Egypt is compared favorably to the previous Eastern religions:

The first noteworthy point is that Herodotus says the Egyptians were the first to have believed and taught that the human soul is immortal. Chinese reverence for their ancestors and the Indians' transmigration of the soul... can lead us to believe that Herodotus, being uninformed or ignorant, spoke in error. But to grasp his words solely with respect to the meaning of his account, we must be clear as to what belief in immortality of the soul means. Every people has a representation of the immortality of the soul, although this representation lends itself to quite diverse characterizations; so we must of course examine whether there is agreement regarding what we call immortality.⁶⁸

The goal of the Hindu was explicitly to eliminate the self and all its personal desires, characteristics, and interests in order to enter into a relation with the divine. This view was not the preservation of the individual and what was characteristic about the person but just the opposite—the dissolution of the individual. Thus what is immortal is merely an abstraction and not a person.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See R.T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, p. 124. Apparently the notion of immortality began with kings, but then in the course of time the notion was extended to common people as well.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 215; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 285. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 355; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 474. *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 650; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 291. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 233; *Jub.*, vol. 17, p. 286. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 347; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 284. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 627; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 520. See Herodotus, *The Histories*, p. 178, Book II, 123: "The Egyptians say that Demeter and Dionysus are the chief powers in the underworld; and they were also the first people to put forward the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and to maintain that after death it enters another creature at the moment of that creature's birth."

⁶⁸ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 360f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 301.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 355; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 473: "The Indian rises only to the emptiest abstraction and therefore the abstraction which is likewise negative in contrast to everything

By contrast, the Egyptians had a sense of immortality which preserved the individual soul as a self-conscious entity. When it is said that the Egyptians believed that the human soul is immortal, this

is intended to mean that it is something other than nature—that spirit is inherently independent. The *ne plus ultra* of blessedness among the Hindus was the passing over into abstract unity—into nothingness. On the other hand, subjectivity, when free, is inherently infinite: the kingdom of free spirit is therefore the kingdom of the invisible—such as Hades was conceived by the Greeks. This presents itself to men first as the empire of death—to the Egyptians as the *realm of the dead*.⁷⁰

While the Hindus knew of nothing higher than nature, the Egyptians had the ability to abstract from nature and the world of perception that they saw around them and imagine a world that they did not see: the sphere where the deceased souls live. For Hegel, this act requires a higher cognitive faculty than simple sense perception.

According to Hegel, the Egyptians had a better-developed sense of human freedom and the value of the individual than that found in the other Eastern religions. He contrasts the Egyptian view explicitly with some of the religions that he has already treated: “Indian ‘Spinozism’ does not allow that subjectivity could have an infinite, free self-subsistence; instead, the fact that substance modified itself at one point is only a superficial modification.”⁷¹ Judaism also falls short with regard to the question of immortality, although Hegel places it higher than the Egyptian belief system in the hierarchy of world religions.⁷² The Egyptians represent a further development from the other Eastern religions on this point.

The developed notion of the individual that one finds revealed in the Egyptian conception of immortality can be seen in the fact that the souls are judged for their deeds. In the papyrus known as *The Book of the Dead of Hunefer*, Osiris sits on the right in judgment as the god Anubis (with the head of a dog or jackal) leads in the dead on the left (see Fig. 7.1). The heart of the deceased is weighed on the scales against a feather to see if the person is morally worthy. If the dead soul does not pass this test and his heart weighs more than the feather, then the god Ammut (with the head of a crocodile, the body of a hippopotamus, and the mane of a lion) waits eagerly to devour the heart and with it the soul. These events are carefully recorded by Thoth,

concrete. Such an Indian process of becoming Brahma does not occur in Egypt; on the contrary, the invisible has a deeper meaning for the Egyptians; the dead acquires the content of the living itself. Deprived of immediate existence, the dead still preserves in its separation from life its relation to the living, and in this concrete shape it is made independent and maintained.”

⁷⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 215; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 285f. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 347; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 284.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* ⁷² Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 361; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 302.

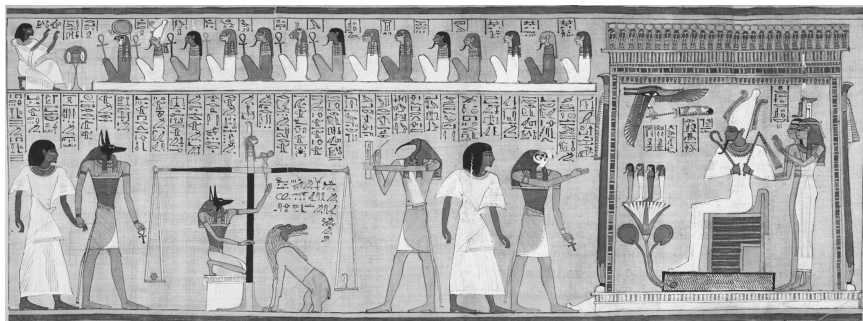


Fig. 7.1. Page from *The Book of the Dead of Hunefer* in The British Museum. ART Collection / Alamy Stock Photo.

the scribe god (with the head of an ibis). If the dead manage to pass this test, then they are led by Horus (the god with the head of a hawk) to Osiris who sits enthroned, ruling over the realm of the dead. Hegel himself describes this scene (or a very similar one): “Osiris is especially the lord of the realm of the dead, the judge of the dead. We find countless pictures in which Osiris is portrayed as the judge, with a scribe before him who is enumerating for him the deeds of the soul that has been brought into his presence.”⁷³ It is quite possible that Hegel was familiar with this image from the reproduction that appears in Hirt’s *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*.⁷⁴

The idea of judging people for their moral worth or holding them responsible for their actions implies a more developed conception of the individual than what has been seen before. Individuals and their moral decisions are now thought to have an importance and value that was not formerly recognized. The moral life of each individual person is important enough to warrant its own particular legal proceeding. The immortality of individuals depends on how they acted in the world. To the moral life of the individual there now accrues an enormous significance. The ideas of justice and morality are all bound up with the Egyptian conception of immortality and arise here for

⁷³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 633n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 526n. See also Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 217; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 288: “One of the principal representations on the sarcophagi is this judicial process in the realm of the dead. Osiris—with Isis behind him—appears, holding a balance, while before him stands the soul of the deceased.” See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 359; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 478. See the description given in Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (2nd fully revised edition, 1819–21), vol. 1, pp. 426ff.

⁷⁴ Hirt, *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*, p. 34: “bei dem Seelengerichte des Osiris steht [Anubis] immer zugleich mit Helios an der Wage.” Hirt then refers to the image of this that he reproduces as Tafel VII, figures 24 and 25. Hirt refers to Tafel VII, figure 24 again with reference to the god Thoth (*ibid.*, p. 35): “Der Gott [Thoth] kommt ferner im Todtengericht des Osiris vor, das Thun der zu Richtenden mit dem Stylus auf Papier vorzeichend.” See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 218; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 289: “Of Anubis-Hermes the myth says that he embalmed the body of Osiris.” This is also an image that appears in Hirt; see Tafel VI, figure 53.

the first time.⁷⁵ Needless to say, these are important steps in the development of spirit.

Hegel discusses the elaborate care that the Egyptians took with their dead. He notes the paradoxical fact that peoples who believe in immortality tend to take better care of the physical bodies of the dead than those peoples who have no sense of immortality.⁷⁶ The idea here is that spirit does not want to allow the body to be exposed to the forces of nature after death. Spirit knows itself to be higher than nature, and thus it also attempts to preserve the body of the dead against its ravages. In this disposition one can find the origin of the complicated practice of embalming and mummifying the body as well as the elaborate rituals the Egyptians developed to accompany this process.

The key point is again that, for Hegel, the notion of immortality is closely connected to the notion of human freedom. Since the ambitious story that he tells in all of his lectures is about the development of human freedom, and since the two concepts are related, it follows that the arrival of a conception of immortality is worthy of note. He explains:

Moreover, the Egyptians go beyond this immediate and even still natural duration of the dead. What is preserved naturally is also interpreted in their *ideas* as enduring. . . . With them, that is, there first emerges in this higher way too the separation between nature and spirit, since it is not merely the natural which acquired independence for itself. The immortality of the soul lies very close to the freedom of the spirit, because [the conception of immortality implies that] the self comprehends itself as withdrawn from the naturalness of existence and as resting on itself; but this self-knowledge is the principle of freedom.⁷⁷

In this key passage Hegel explains that by human freedom he means in part the rights of the individual or what he calls “subjective freedom.” In previous cultures these rights did not exist, and the individual had no status compared to the higher rights of the family, the clan, the caste, the society, or the state. But with the notion of the immortality of the individual, there begins to emerge the first faint glimmer of a conception of the person as something important and valuable on his or her own terms.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 355f.; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 474: “This insight of theirs is broadened into the conception of an independent realm of the dead in contrast to the presence of what is immediately real. In this kingdom of the invisible a judgment of the dead is held, and Osiris as Amenthes presides over it. The same tribunal is then also present in immediate reality, since among men too the dead are judged, and after the decease of a king, for example, anyone could bring his grievances to that court of judgment.”

⁷⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 216; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 286f.

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 355; *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 473f.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 216; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 286: “The idea that spirit is immortal involves this—that the human individual inherently possesses infinite value. The merely natural appears limited—absolutely dependent upon something other than itself—and has its existence in that other; but immortality involves the inherent infinitude of spirit. This idea is first found among the Egyptians.”

While the Egyptians have attained a higher sense of immortality than the other Eastern religions, they still have not yet reached the full modern view that only arises in Christianity. Hegel explains the desired developed view and contrasts it with that of the Egyptians:

Our view of immortality is essentially the characteristic of the person as destined for eternity, the view that the spirit or the soul has an eternal purpose wholly distinct from its finite purpose, distinct from temporality. Where this depth of the soul goes unmentioned, what can appear to be a [mere] continuation is meager and lacking in interest. The higher destiny that is conferred upon human life in faith constitutes faith's genuine interest in the soul's continuation. For the Egyptians, the consciousness of the existence of such a higher purpose has not yet arisen.⁷⁹

The Egyptian conception of immortality consisted merely of the continued existence of the soul in the realm of the dead, but this does not, on its own, provide one with a higher purpose or mission. Instead, the Egyptian afterlife can in some ways appear similar to mundane existence. As evidence Hegel refers to the fact that the Egyptians were buried with the tools that they would need to continue the profession they had in life and with papyrus scrolls containing information about the property that they owned, the taxes that they paid, etc.⁸⁰ Thus in death one is not freed from all the concerns of mundane life and raised to something higher.

This doctrine clearly supports the general interpretation argued for here, namely, that, according to Hegel, a people's self-conception is intimately and necessarily tied to its conception of religion and to the divine. He explains this quite straightforwardly in terms of the Egyptians' understanding of death:

It is of essential moment to observe what importance this realm of the dead had for the Egyptian: we may thence gather what idea he had of man. For in the dead, man conceives of man as stripped of all adventitious wrappings—as reduced to his essential nature. But that which a people regards as man in his essential characteristics, that it is itself—such is its character.⁸¹

The Egyptians' understanding of themselves in death was *ipso facto* the key to understanding their anthropology and self-image. Religious belief is simply one cultural area where this self-conception is made explicit and can be observed and analyzed.

With their doctrine of immortality, the Egyptians have taken a major step out of the Eastern conceptions of religion towards what Hegel regards as a more developed approach. This is an important point in light of the debates

⁷⁹ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 361; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 302. See also Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 216f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 287.

⁸⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 217; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 287f.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 215; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 285.

following Hegel's death about the question of whether he had a doctrine of immortality. A major criticism leveled against his thought was that he nowhere in his system outlined a straightforward and unambiguous doctrine of the immortality of the soul. But yet in analyses like this one, it is clear that a doctrine of immortality is to be found in his general view of the development of spirit in history and religion. It is part and parcel of his general theory of human freedom. Thus there can be no doubt that he has a theory of immortality and that he regards the doctrine to be one that is properly a part of the most developed forms of spirit and religion.

7.4. THE EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS AND SYMBOLS

Hegel states repeatedly that the Egyptian religion represents a transitional stage between the religions of nature and the religions of spirit. He formulates this in a number of different ways, for example, "With art [the Egyptian] spirit is still stuck at the halfway mark."⁸² Similarly, he claims, "the Egyptian unity—combining contradictory elements—occupies a middle place."⁸³ While the Egyptian religion is one of mystery, the great term of contrast is, for Hegel, the Greek religion, where everything is out in the open and transparent. The Egyptians occupy a transitional phase since they have managed to pose the problem of the inner and the outer to themselves but have failed to resolve it. They have begun to attempt to reveal the hidden and the mysterious aspect of their religion but have not yet achieved this.

Since the Egyptian religion is a transitional one, its forms are always mixed ones, neither wholly what came before nor wholly what comes after. Their architecture is a mixture of particular forms of nature and the universal forms of the mind.⁸⁴ Most importantly the transitional aspect of the Egyptian spirit is reflected in their divinities. In Egypt for the first time, it begins to dawn on the human mind that the divine is spirit: "The solution and liberation of that Oriental Spirit, which in Egypt had advanced so far as to propose the problem, is certainly this: that the inner being of nature is thought, which has its existence only in the human consciousness."⁸⁵ It thus paves the way for the further development of the concept of the divine.

One important aspect of the transitional nature of the Egyptian religion is their writing, that is, the hieroglyphs. The time when Hegel arrived in Berlin corresponded to the period in which the excitement about the deciphering of

⁸² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 378; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 279.

⁸³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 218; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 289.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Hegel, *PhS*, p. 422; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 532.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 220; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 292.

the hieroglyphs was at its peak,⁸⁶ and Hegel followed the developments in this field closely. In 1798 Napoleon's forces in the town of Rashid (Rosetta) near Alexandria found the Rosetta stone, which contained parallel inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphics, Demotic script, and Greek. Containing the same text written in three different languages, the stone proved to be a useful tool since the hieroglyphics could be directly compared to the accompanying Greek text, which was, of course, readable to scholars.

With the help of this tool Thomas Young, who was foreign secretary of the Royal Society of London, was able to determine that the hieroglyphs were not simply symbolic pictographs, representing things or ideas, but rather were phonetic, representing sounds.⁸⁷ Drawing on Young's work, the Frenchman Jean-François Champollion was able to identify the phonetic values of some of the hieroglyphs by fixing on specific names which appeared in the texts, "Ptolemaios" and "Cleopatra." Based on this, he was able to develop an alphabet of hieroglyphics, which assigned phonetic values to the specific symbols. Champollion wrote to Bon-Joseph Dacier (1742–1833), the secretary of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres in Paris and explained to him the new system. This account was published right away with the title, *Lettre à M. Dacier, relative à l'alphabet des hiéroglyphes phonétiques*.⁸⁸ Since it was a question of national rivalry between the French and the British, Young responded to this work in 1823 with his *Account of Some Recent Discoveries in Hieroglyphical Literature and Egyptian Antiquities*.⁸⁹ In 1824 Champollion published the more or less perfected version of his system: *Précis du Système Hiéroglyphique des Anciens Égyptiens*.⁹⁰

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel gives a brief overview of the story of the deciphering of the hieroglyphs, which demonstrates that he was

⁸⁶ For an overview of the story of the deciphering of the hieroglyphics, see Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in the European Tradition*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad 1961, pp. 124–45.

⁸⁷ See Andrew Robinson, *The Last Man Who Knew Everything: Thomas Young, The Anonymous Polymath Who Proved Newton Wrong, Explained How We See, Cured the Sick and Deciphered the Rosetta Stone, Among Other Feats of Genius*, New York: Pearson Education 2006, pp. 143–63.

⁸⁸ Jean-François Champollion, *Lettre à M. Dacier, relative à l'alphabet des hiéroglyphes phonétiques*, Paris: Firmin Didot Père et Fils 1822. For an account of Champollion, see Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, New York: Columbia University Press 1984, pp. 84–7.

⁸⁹ Thomas Young, *Account of Some Recent Discoveries in Hieroglyphical Literature and Egyptian Antiquities*, London: John Murray 1823.

⁹⁰ Jean-François Champollion, *Précis du Système Hiéroglyphique des Anciens Égyptiens*, Paris: Treuttel et Würtz 1824. This latter work was accompanied by a supplement volume of "Planches et explication": *Précis du Système Hiéroglyphique des Anciens Égyptiens, Planches et explication*, Paris: Treuttel et Würtz 1824. It should also be noted that Hegel owned a French translation of the work by James Browne that recounted the developments in this field. [James] Brown[e], *Aperçu sur les hiéroglyphes d'Égypte et les progrès faits jusqu'à présent dans leur déchiffrement*, traduit de l'anglais, Paris: Ponthieu et Compagnie 1827 (*Hegel's Library*, 649).

clearly up to date on the research in this area.⁹¹ Hegel knew not only the main figures involved in the research but also more concretely how the deciphering was done using names to identify the phonetic values of the individual hieroglyphs.

Hegel points out that the hieroglyphs are not abstract symbols such as are employed in the Greek and Latin alphabets. Rather they are depictions of plants and animals and objects of nature. This represents, he argues, a development of writing that has only stopped halfway and failed to reach full development. The Egyptians have not yet attained the level of pure symbols, but rather they have come to a halt with the use of images of birds and other animals to represent both things and sounds. For Hegel, hieroglyphs are not just pictures but are not yet genuine writing either. They are something mixed and intermediate: "Written language is still a hieroglyphic; and its basis is only the sensuous image, not the letter itself."⁹²

The hieroglyphs are, however, just one example of the Egyptians' use of symbols. In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel characterizes Egyptian art in general as symbolic. He explains that the Egyptians begin with an object of sense, that is, a particular, and then use it to represent an abstract, universal concept.⁹³ The Egyptians were fascinated by the natural world around them, and the objects of nature provided the occasion for them to think further. Nature or the object of sense was a point of departure; it extended beyond itself as a symbol for a general idea. Hegel explains:

So, representation progresses from the exclusively immediate representation to something further. We have every reason to take such forms as symbols. Posited explicitly as such, as symbols, they are, moreover, positioned differently here where the animal figure is transformed and thus not left to be as it exhibited itself in immediacy. Here belongs the juxtaposing of animal figures, for instance, a snake with the head of a bull or ram, or a lion body with a crocodile tail and a ram's head, and so forth.⁹⁴

The Egyptians thus do not simply revel in the immediate objects of nature but use them to represent something higher. But yet since they need this natural or animal symbol, they have not yet liberated themselves fully from nature.

The life, death, and rebirth of Osiris is thought to symbolize the cycles of the Nile with the alternating flooding and dry season. Along the same lines Hegel gives a number of examples of the way in which objects of nature are used as symbols:

The brute form is . . . turned into a symbol. . . . I refer here to the innumerable figures on the Egyptian monuments, of sparrow-hawks or falcons, dung

⁹¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 200; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 266f.

⁹² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 199; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 265. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 357; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 476. *PhS*, p. 423; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 533.

⁹³ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 352f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 291.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 354; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 292f.

beetles, scarabaei, etc. It is not known what ideas such figures symbolized, and we can scarcely think that a satisfactory view of this very obscure subject is attainable. The dung-beetle is said to be the symbol of generation—of the sun and its course . . .⁹⁵

The scarab beetle was regarded as sacred by the Egyptians for a couple of different reasons. First, it lays its eggs in a ball of dung, which it pushes along and ultimately deposits in a hole in the ground. The beetle pushing the ball was associated with the god Khepri, who was thought to push the sun across the sky. Thus Khepri is the name of the sun god in the form of a beetle. Many depictions of the beetle show it pushing a yellow or orange orb, representing the sun. Second, when the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on the dung until they are ready to leave the hole and seek food on their own. The appearance of the young beetles leaving their hole gave the Egyptians the idea that they were simply born spontaneously out of nothing in the same way that Khepri was born out of nothing from the primeval water. Due to this the Egyptians regarded the scarab as sacred and produced many beautiful trinkets, jewelry, and amulets with precious stones decorated with images of the scarab as a symbol of creation and rebirth.

On this topic it is quite likely that Hegel was drawing on the analysis given by Creuzer, who presents the beetle as “the highest of all Egyptian symbols.”⁹⁶ Creuzer likewise refers to the account of the beetle as the symbol of procreation and life given in the *Description de l'Égypte*.⁹⁷ Another possible source is the specialized work of Johann Joachim Bellermann, *Über die Scarabäen-Gemmen, nebst Versuchen, die darauf befindlichen Hieroglyphen zu erklären*.⁹⁸ This text attempts to give an account of the gems representing the scarab beetle, which were found in the Royal Antique Cabinet in Berlin. Bellermann tries to interpret the hieroglyphic inscriptions on these precious stones.

This analysis of the use of animals as symbols squares with Hegel's understanding of the Egyptians as mysterious and enigmatic since symbols are not immediately transparent. The objects used as symbols have no necessary relation to the concept that they symbolize. To the uninitiated, the connection is unclear: “A symbol, however, is always something opaque. In language there is free clarity; in the symbol, the representation is expressed only opaquely by human beings or by the sensible element. The representation does not become

⁹⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 213; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 282. See also Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 352f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 290f.

⁹⁶ Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (2nd fully revised edition, 1819–21), vol. 1, p. 489.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 490.

⁹⁸ Johann Joachim Bellermann, *Über die Scarabäen-Gemmen, nebst Versuchen, die darauf befindlichen Hieroglyphen zu erklären*, vols 1–2, Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung 1820–1 (*Hegel's Library*, 640–1).

entirely clear; it merely makes use of the symbol.”⁹⁹ By their use of symbols the Egyptians were confined to opaque communication. Thus the Egyptians did not reach the point of transparency and full revelation about their conception of themselves.

7.5. THE COMBINING OF THE HUMAN AND THE ANIMAL

One of the most important characteristic features of the gods in the Egyptian religion is that they are represented as entities which constitute a mixture of human and animal. The Egyptian divinities are not purely gods of nature, such as the sacred cow of the Hindus or light of the Persians. An element of the animal is still present, but now for the first time a human element is also introduced, mixed together with it. Hegel explains, in the Egyptian religion “the animal form is used intermingled with the human; we find human figures with lions’ heads, and these are taken for shapes of Minerva [sc. Neith]; hawks’ heads occur too, and horns are left on the heads of Ammon.”¹⁰⁰

It is not difficult to find examples of the kind of thing that Hegel is referring to. His favorite example of a mixed figure is the image of the sphinx. The sphinx, of course, has the body of an animal and the head of a human being. But most of the Egyptian deities reverse this and have a human body and the head of some kind of animal. For example, Ra (the sun god) is represented with the head of a hawk, Sobek, the head of a crocodile, and Khnum, the head of a ram. The same holds true of the female deities. Sekhmet has the head of a lion, Bastet, the head of a cat and Taweret the head of a hippopotamus.

Hegel describes in detail one of Egypt’s most famous gods Anubis, who has the body of a human and a head of a dog or jackal:

Anubis is called the friend and companion of Osiris. To him is ascribed the invention of writing, and of science generally—of grammar, astronomy, mensuration, music, and medicine. It was he who first divided the day into twelve hours; he was, moreover, the first lawgiver, the first instructor in religious observances and objects, and in gymnastics and orchestics; and it was he who discovered the olive. But, notwithstanding all the spiritual attributes, the divinity is something quite other than the god of thought. Only particular human

⁹⁹ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 353f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 292.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 357; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 476. See also *PhS*, p. 423; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 533: “the shape, too, is no longer solely and entirely used by the artificer, but is blended with the shape of thought, with a human form. But the work still lacks the shape and outer reality in which the self exists as self.”

arts and inventions are associated with him. Not only so; but he entirely falls back . . . and is degraded under physical symbols. He is represented with a dog's head, as an imbruted god . . .¹⁰¹

Hegel's information seems not entirely precise here since Anubis is primarily associated with the process of mummification and the guarding of graves. But his general point still seems to hold. Since Anubis is said to have created important aspects of human affairs such as science (or mummification), one would expect him to be represented in an anthropomorphic manner given that it is after all only humans who have science. But this is not the way in which he is depicted. With the head of a dog, he is not yet freed from nature. A similar oddity can be found in the god Thoth, who has the head of an ibis and the body of a man. Thoth is said to be the inventor of hieroglyphics and is thus the god of writing and wisdom. He is often portrayed as recording, by means of writing, the fate of the dead souls by the weighing of the heart. Given this, one would again expect this god to have a fully human appearance since it is only humans that have writing. It is thus odd that he has the head of an ibis and that he is often portrayed as a baboon. The Egyptians have thus reached a level where they regard certain human activities as divine or, put differently, where human beings are thought to share certain aspects with the divine; however, they do not yet regard these things as entirely the work of spirit. There is still a natural element attached to them.

It is clear from his reading notes that for this analysis Hegel availed himself of the descriptions of the Egyptian gods that he found in Hirt's *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*.¹⁰² Systematically gathering together the ancient accounts, Hirt gives detailed descriptions of, among others, Anubis, Thoth, Horus, and Seth.¹⁰³ At the end of his analysis Hirt notes that while there are many Egyptian gods, who are portrayed with dual properties of animal and human, there are other gods, such as Osiris, who are always represented as wholly anthropomorphic.¹⁰⁴ This would seem at first glance to contradict Hegel's characterization. But this discrepancy can, according to Hegel's view, be explained as a natural feature of the historical development of the Egyptian religion, which took place over centuries. Most of the deities who are depicted as having a human body and an animal head are also depicted as entirely animal in form. So Sobek can be seen as just a crocodile, Ra as just a hawk and Anubis as just a dog. This can be regarded as the original conception of these gods. But when in the course of time the Egyptians became more

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 210; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 279.

¹⁰² See Helmut Schneider, "Hegel und die ägyptischen Götter. Ein Exzerpt," *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 16, 1981, pp. 56–68.

¹⁰³ Hirt, *Ueber die Bildung der Aegyptischen Gottheiten*: Anubis (pp. 32–4), Thoth (pp. 34–5), Horus (pp. 45–9), and Seth (pp. 51–5).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

aware of the principle of spirit, then the human elements began to appear, and then these gods began to be portrayed as mixed figures. A few of the gods have made the transition to the anthropomorphic, while most have not. This understanding of the development of the Egyptian religion would explain why there are these three kinds of deities—animal, human, and mixed (animal and human)—with varying degrees of ambiguity and overlap.¹⁰⁵

In any case, Hegel explains the importance of these mixed figures by claiming that they arise when the conception of spirit and the corresponding conception the divine have reached a specific level. The Egyptians have begun to attain the level where their self-conception allows them to conceive of the divine as a self-conscious subject, and it is for this reason that the deities mentioned above have some human characteristics. Therefore, there is a need to move away from the representations of the divine in terms of animals or other objects of nature. Now the human element attempts to emerge from the natural.¹⁰⁶ This therefore marks the transition from the religions of nature to what Hegel calls “The Religion of Spiritual Individuality.” In short, this is a movement from consciousness to self-consciousness. Until now we have explored forms of the divine as external objects of nature in different forms: light, plants, animals. Only later will this liberation of spirit from nature be completed.

Greek art is able to portray the individuality of the specific person since it is aware of the importance and value of the individual. By contrast, the Egyptians have not yet reached this level; thus their portrayals of human beings all look more or less alike. They are unable to capture the individual personality and character of specific persons. In order to do so, they have recourse to the animal symbols, as is seen in their depictions of the gods:

it requires the higher kind of art to enliven the human figure into being a free and distinct expression of an [individual] character. The Egyptians were not yet capable of this, and in order to render the figure in particular form, they employed once again the animal aspect or animal figure, and thus represented human beings with the heads of rams, sparrow hawks, bulls, lions, and apes. Greek art understood how to achieve the particular, spiritual expression in beauty itself, so that the human countenance as such is intelligible of itself, whereas in Egypt the intelligibility is supposed to be brought about by means of animal figures.¹⁰⁷

The Greek gods such as Zeus and Apollo are free personalities since the Greeks understood the principle of subjective freedom. By contrast, the Egyptian gods have less individuality since the individual did not have the same elevated

¹⁰⁵ Although it is not mentioned by Hirt, it should also be noted that there is another group of deities which is portrayed as a mixture of different animals, for example, Ammut, the goddess of the underworld, who has the head of a crocodile, the upper body of a leopard and the back legs of a hippopotamus.

¹⁰⁶ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 354; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 293.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

meaning for them. In any case the mixture of the animal and the human is another important aspect of Hegel's characterization of the Egyptian religion as transitional.

7.6. THE EGYPTIAN GODDESS NEITH AND THE GREEK GOD APOLLO

One compelling idea that Hegel uses to capture the transition from the Egyptian to the Greek religion is a contrast between the message of the Egyptian goddess Neith and the Greek god Apollo. Neith was the tutelary deity of the city of Sais, which was the capital of Egypt in the 26th Dynasty.¹⁰⁸ An important political and religious center, Sais was said to be the site of the grave of Osiris. It contained a great temple dedicated to Neith. The ancient Greek authors identify her with Athena. Neither the ancient city nor the temple survives. The motif of the goddess Neith is a complex one that involves a series of both ancient and modern sources. By using this image Hegel is thus attaching himself to a long tradition. However, with that said, his comparison of Neith with Apollo is original. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, one reads:

That the spirit of the Egyptians presented itself to their consciousness in the form of a problem, is evident from the celebrated inscription in the sanctuary of the Goddess Neith at Sais: "I am that which is, that which was, and that which will be; no one has lifted my veil." This inscription indicates the principle of the Egyptian Spirit.¹⁰⁹

Hegel recounts the same story in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where he adds an additional line about the inscription: "'The fruit of my body is Helios, etc.' This still hidden essence expresses clarity or the sun, that which is itself becoming clear or the spiritual sun, as the son who is born from it."¹¹⁰ Neith is the creator of the universe. Her name can mean "water," and so she was associated with the primal waters at the beginning of creation. She has created everything and knows its nature and fate, and due to this it is said that she knows everything that was, is and shall be. The goddess is in possession of the truth but conceals it behind a veil. The truth is hidden from view to all mortals since it is not for them to know. She represents nature, which hides its

¹⁰⁸ See C.J. Bleeker, "The Egyptian Goddess Neith," in the author's *The Rainbow: A Collection of Studies in the Science of Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1975 (*Studies in the History of Religions* (Supplements to *Numen*), vol. 30), pp. 128–42.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 220; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 291.

¹¹⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 639; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 532. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 152; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 58. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 746; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 631.

secrets. But although the goddess veils the truth to the Egyptians, her offspring is the sun. For Hegel, this has symbolic value since the sun represents the Greek spirit, where things are revealed and no longer hidden.¹¹¹ The idea is that only at the next stage of history is the mystery and secrecy of the Egyptian worldview overcome with the openness and revelation of the Greeks.

The two main ancient sources of this inscription are Plutarch and Proclus. In Plutarch's version the second part is missing, i.e., the line, "the fruit of my body is Helios."¹¹² This part of the inscription is, however, recorded by Proclus.¹¹³ In any case in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* Hegel makes it clear that he is familiar with both variants and both sources:

In this regard we have to recall the Greek inscription of the goddess at Sais (the goddess called Neith in Egyptian, Παλλάς in Greek): "I am what is and what was, and no mortal had lifted my covering or my veil." Expressed here is this unknown—the longing for, and supposition of, something higher, and the added point that it is not disclosed. This is how Plutarch puts it, and in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Proclus introduces this inscription with the addition: "The fruit that I bore is the sun, Helios."¹¹⁴

Moreover, there are also more general references to Sais in Plato's *Timaeus* and Herodotus' *Histories*.¹¹⁵

In addition to the ancient sources, this was also a motif used by writers in Hegel's own time and even earlier, including figures such as Voltaire, Kant, Schiller, and Novalis.¹¹⁶ Hegel was thus drawing on a rich tradition when he

¹¹¹ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 367; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 310: "This sun or Helios, to which this veiled goddess has given birth, is the Greek spirit or the Greek light, is Phoebus Apollo, who has the sun as his radiance."

¹¹² See *Isis and Osiris in Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, Chapter 9, p. 25: "In Sais the statue of Athena, whom they believe to be Isis, bore the inscription: 'I am all that has been, and is, and shall be, and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered.'" See Helmut Schneider, "Hegel und die ägyptischen Götter. Ein Exzerpt," *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 16, 1981, p. 65.

¹¹³ See ΠΡΟΚΛΟΥ ΔΙΑΔΟΧΟΥ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΙΚΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΑ ΕΞ. Procli successoris Platonici in Platonis Theologiam, Libri sex, Hamburg: Apud Michaellem Heringivm 1618 (*Hegel's Library*, 381). Proclus, *The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timaeus of Plato, in Five Books*, trans. by Thomas Taylor, vols 1–2, London: Printed by the Author 1820, Book I, 30, p. 82: "But the Egyptians relate, that in the adytum of the Goddess there was this inscription, *I am the things that are, that will be, and that have been. No one has ever laid open the garment by which I am concealed. The fruit which I brought forth was the sun.*" See Helmut Schneider, "Hegel und die ägyptischen Götter. Ein Exzerpt," *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 16, 1981, p. 65.

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 367; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 310.

¹¹⁵ See also Plato, *Timeaus* 23d and ff. Herodotus, *Histories*, Book II, 170ff.

¹¹⁶ A wonderful overview of these modern sources is given by Jan Assmann in his *Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais. Schillers Ballade und ihre griechischen und ägyptischen Hintergründe*, Stuttgart and Leipzig: B.G. Teubner 1999. See also Christine Harrauer, "Ich bin, was da ist . . ." Die Göttin Sais und ihre Deutung von Plutarch bis in die Goethezeit," *Wiener Studien. Zeitschrift für Klassische Philologie und Patristik*, vols 107–108, 1994–95 (ΣΦΑΙΡΟΣ, Festschrift for Hans

made use of this motif,¹¹⁷ which appears as early as “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate.”¹¹⁸ There were clearly two main established lines of interpretation: first, the goddess as representing the hidden knowledge of the sciences, and, second, the goddess as establishing a connection between the Egyptian religion and early Judaism. The first of these tends to focus on the image of the veil, while the second on the other part of the inscription: “I am what is, was and shall be.” Hegel’s interpretation of this draws primarily on the first line of interpretation, but he insofar as he uses it to illustrate a transition from the Egyptian religion to the next stage of religious development, one can also say that he makes use of elements of the second line as well.

In any case, he also adds his own special twist to the story by juxtaposing the statue of Neith, who represents the Egyptian spirit, with the Greek god Apollo, who represents the Greek spirit. Neith hides the truth from her followers by means of a veil. She represents mystery and forbidden knowledge. By contrast, Apollo does not hide the truth but rather enjoins his followers to seek and know it. Hegel explains:

The Greek Apollo is its solution [to the problem of the Egyptians]; his utterance is “Man, know thyself.” In this dictum is not intended a self-recognition that regards the specialties of one’s own weakness and defects: it is not the individual that is admonished to become acquainted with his idiosyncrasy, but humanity in general is summoned to self-knowledge. This mandate was given for the Greeks, and in the Greek spirit humanity exhibits itself in its clear and developed condition.¹¹⁹

While the truth for the Egyptians was hidden and mysterious, for the Greeks it was out in the open and freely accessible. The account that Hegel gives of the development of religion and history is about the coming to self-knowledge of the individual historical peoples of the world. This is reflected in their self-conception and in their divinities. According to Hegel, it is with the Greek spirit that an important shift takes place and the validity of the individual is recognized for the first time—the truth is something belonging to the individual.

Moreover, the emphasis is on humanity coming to recognize itself as spirit. In order to do so, it must recognize its gods as spirit. Hegel explains:

Schwabl), pp. 337–55. Pierre Hadot, *Le Voile d’Isis: Essai sur l’histoire de l’idée de nature*, Paris: Gallimard 2004.

¹¹⁷ Unfortunately Hegel’s use of this rich motif has not attracted much attention in the secondary literature. See Udo Reinhold Jeck, “Die enigmatische Inschrift zu Sais. Hegels spekulative Deutung eines ägyptischen Mythologems aus dem Geist des orientalisierenden Platonismus,” *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, vols 15–17, 2014, pp. 159–275.

¹¹⁸ Hegel, *TJ*, p. 250n; *ETW*, p. 191n.

¹¹⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 220; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 291. See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 367f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 310.

It is so much the more noteworthy that nevertheless the oracle of the Delphian Apollo, Pythia, declared Socrates to be the wisest Greek. Socrates it was who carried out the command of the God of knowledge, "Know Thyself," and made it the motto of the Greeks, calling it the law of the mind, and not interpreting it as meaning a mere acquaintance with the particular nature of man. Thus Socrates is the hero who established in the place of the Delphic oracle, the principle that man must look within himself to know what is truth. Now seeing that Pythia herself pronounced that utterance, we find in it a complete revolution in the Greek mind, and the fact that in place of the oracle, the personal self-consciousness of every thinking man has come into play.¹²⁰

Socrates introduced the principle of subjective freedom to the Greeks: the realization that the truth lies not on the side of established custom and tradition in the outside world, but rather in the mind and conscience of the individual. Now for the first time the individual counts for something and is regarded as meaningful against the demands of the group or the tradition. This was the step that the Egyptians never managed to take. In the comparison of the goddess Neith with Apollo we can see some of the key points that Hegel wants to make in regard to the sweeping story that he is telling about the development of the world religions and the human mind in general.

7.7. THE MYTH OF OEDIPUS AND THE SPHINX

Hegel appeals to yet another image that he believes captures symbolically the transition from Egypt to Greece, namely, the Greek myth of Oedipus and the sphinx.¹²¹ According to the legend, the sphinx, the symbolic representation of Egypt, came to the Greek town of Thebes and terrorized its citizens by posing a riddle and devouring everyone who could not answer it correctly. The riddle was the following: What kind of a creature walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon and three at night? The sphinx was a great bane for the Thebans since no one could solve the conundrum. Oedipus was famed for his knowledge (and thus his tragic downfall is caused by his pride about his intelligence coupled with his ignorance of his acts: unknowingly killing his father and marrying his mother). Before these well-known events, however, Oedipus, with his wisdom, managed to find the solution to the riddle. The creature in question is a human being, who, as a child, crawls on all fours, and then as an adult walks on two legs, and then finally in old age walks, so to speak, on three

¹²⁰ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 435; *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 107.

¹²¹ There were numerous ancient sources for this myth. See, for example, Apollodorus, *Library*, Book 3, 5, 8; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book 9, 26, 2; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, Book 4, 64, 3–4. Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 67.

legs with the help of a cane or crutch. The ages of life thus represent figuratively the times of the day, morning, noon, and night. Oedipus in this way solved the riddle, and with this the Sphinx threw itself down a precipice, and Thebes was finally liberated.

Hegel finds great symbolic meaning in this story. The idea of an Egyptian sphinx posing riddles is perfectly in character since it is typical of the Egyptian spirit that it is dominated by mysteries:

Egypt is the country of symbols, the country which sets itself the spiritual task of the self-deciphering of the spirit, without actually attaining to the decipherment. The problems remain unsolved, and the solution which *we* can provide consists therefore only in interpreting the riddles of Egyptian art and its symbolic works as a problem remaining undeciphered by the Egyptians themselves.¹²²

The Egyptians pose the problem but have no solution to it. Another principle or mindset is required. Hegel recounts the story as follows:

Wonderfully, then, must the Greek legend surprise us, which relates, that the Sphinx—the great Egyptian symbol—appeared in Thebes, uttering the words: “What is that which in the morning goes on four legs, at midday on two, and in the evening on three?” Oedipus, giving the solution, *man*, precipitated the Sphinx from the rock. The solution and liberation of that Oriental Spirit, which in Egypt had advanced so far as to propose the problem, is certainly this: that the inner being [the essence] of nature is thought, which has its existence only in the human consciousness.¹²³

The wise Greek Oedipus solves what was a problem for the Egyptians. Oedipus defeats the Sphinx not by physical strength but by his intellect, the human mind. Unwavering in his search for the truth, he can be seen to represent Western science or reason. He has knowledge, which is forbidden by the Egyptians. Since they are still tied down by nature, the Egyptians sought the solution but were unable to find it.

The content of the solution to the riddle—a human being—is of cardinal importance to Hegel: “In Greek religion the riddle is solved; according to one very significant and admirable myth the Sphinx is slain by a Greek and the riddle is resolved in this way: the content is the human being, the free, self-knowing spirit.”¹²⁴ This is the truth that the Egyptians have not yet realized. Only in Greece are the shackles of nature thrown off and spirit sees itself as spirit. The frightening gods with both human and animal parts are replaced by the purely human form of the Greek gods. The liberation of the human spirit in general is self-consciousness: the human mind coming to know itself.

¹²² Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 354; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 472.

¹²³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 220; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 291f. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 361; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 481. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 639; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 532. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 747; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 631.

¹²⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 639; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 532.

This begins to happen when humans recognize themselves in the gods which are also humanlike or spirit.

With this we reach the end of Hegel's account of the religions of nature. As long as the human mind regards itself as a continuous part of nature and not as spirit, humans can never be truly free. For freedom humans must recognize themselves in other self-conscious entities and not just in objects of nature. Spirit must thus separate itself from nature. In Asia, he explains, spirit

attains actuality not within itself but only in the natural sphere. In this identity of spirit with nature true freedom is impossible. Here man cannot as yet attain to consciousness of his personality and in his individuality has neither value nor rights, neither with the Hindus nor the Chinese.¹²⁵

The long story of the development of the world religions is the story of how the human mind begins to free itself from nature and gradually to regard itself as spirit. It is the coming to self-consciousness of humanity collectively. Hegel explains further:

In the Asiatic race, therefore, spirit is already beginning to awake, to separate itself from the life of nature. But this separation is not yet clear-cut, not yet absolute. Spirit does not as yet grasp itself in its absolute freedom, does not as yet know itself as the concrete universal which is for itself, has not as yet made its Notion into an object for itself in the form of thought. For this reason it still exists as an immediate individual, a form which contradicts the nature of spirit. God does indeed become objective, but not in the form of absolutely free thought, but in that of an immediately existent finite mind or spirit.¹²⁶

According to Hegel, Egypt has reached the highest level of culture among the Eastern peoples. It is here that the first dawning of Western thinking began. In Egypt spirit is trying to break forth but remains trapped in nature.¹²⁷ It realizes that there is something more than nature but cannot wholly rid itself of the natural form. As has been seen, the Egyptians' understanding of the immortality of the soul demonstrates an awareness of the importance and irreducibility of the individual.¹²⁸ The way has now been prepared for the religions that have reached self-consciousness and conceive of their gods as self-conscious beings: the religions of spirit.

¹²⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 393, Addition, pp. 43f.; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 75. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 380; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 280f.

¹²⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 393, Addition, p. 43; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 74f.

¹²⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 218; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 289.

¹²⁸ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 650; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 291.

Judaism

The Religion of Sublimity

The next group of religions that Hegel treats falls under the rubric “The Religions of Spiritual Individuality.” This consists of Judaism, Greek polytheism, and Roman polytheism. While the natural religions had conceptions of the divine that were closely associated with nature, i.e., the natural force of Tian or Heaven in the Chinese religion, sacred animals in Hinduism, fire in Zoroastrianism, the religions in this new group are characterized by a conception of the divine as spirit.

Hegel examines Judaism in a number of different places and maintained an interest in it throughout his life. As a schoolboy in Stuttgart in 1785 he made a study of the Psalms.¹ A critical examination of the Old Testament constituted an important part of his theological studies at Tübingen. In Winter Semester 1788–9 and Summer Semester 1789 he continued his previous study by taking a class on the Psalms.² It is recounted that during his time in Tübingen he especially enjoyed the Book of Job,³ which he presumably took a course on in Winter Semester 1789–90.⁴ As a student of theology Hegel was obliged to give a few trial sermons. For the first of these, which he gave on January 10, 1792, he picked Isaiah 61:7–8 as his text.⁵

¹ See Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1844, p. 11. See also H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1972, p. 47.

² Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, p. 25. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801*, p. 73.

³ See *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, ed. by Günther Nicolini, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1970, p. 12: “Er hatte eine besondere Freude am Buch Hiob wegen der ungeregelten Natursprache, die er darin antraf.”

⁴ Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801*, p. 74.

⁵ See MW, pp. 28–31; *Dokumente*, pp. 175–9. See Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, p. 26. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801*, p. 109.

His interest in Judaism continued during his years as a house tutor in Bern and Frankfurt am Main. In particular, he was keen to explore the relation of Judaism to Christianity. This is reflected in his so-called *Early Theological Writings*.⁶ Of relevance in this context are his treatises “The Life of Jesus,”⁷ “The Positivity of the Christian Religion,”⁸ and “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate,”⁹ all three of which give an interpretation of Jesus’ life and teachings in the context of the Jewish tradition. Especially important is his characterization of “The Spirit of Judaism” in the last mentioned text.¹⁰ Further evidence of his interest in Judaism during this time can be found in the so-called “Fragments of Historical Studies,”¹¹ although there he is more interested in the character of the Jewish people than their religious beliefs *per se*. It should be noted, however, that these early works differ fairly significantly from the presentations that Hegel gives of Judaism in his later lectures. Much of the secondary literature on the topic of Hegel and Judaism treats this material and not Hegel’s later analysis in his lectures.¹²

When during his Jena period he wrote the “Religion” chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he decided, somewhat oddly, not to devote any specific section or chapter to Judaism. Nonetheless some of the key issues associated with it, such as the creation and original sin, do appear in the “Revealed Religion” section of that chapter, which is, of course, dedicated to Christianity.¹³ Traces of his later interpretation of Judaism can also be found in the section dedicated to the “unhappy consciousness” in the “Self-Consciousness” chapter.¹⁴ Hegel’s omission of a specific analysis of Judaism in the *Phenomenology* is particularly odd given his fairly intensive occupation with it prior to coming to Jena and writing the work. Perhaps the explanation for its absence can be found in the troubled and hasty composition of the text in its final stages, something which is particularly in evidence in the “Religion” chapter.

In the final decade of his life Hegel gave accounts of Judaism in varying degrees of detail in different contexts. He mentions the Jews as a people in a couple of passages in the *Philosophy of Right*, however, without entering into

⁶ See Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s Leben*, pp. 48–9.

⁷ *TJ*, pp. 73–136; *TE*, pp. 104–65.

⁸ *TJ*, pp. 137–240; *ETW*, pp. 67–181.

⁹ *TJ*, pp. 241–342; *ETW*, pp. 182–301.

¹⁰ *TJ*, pp. 241–60; *ETW*, pp. 182–205.

¹¹ Hegel, “Fragments of Historical Studies,” *MW*, p. 93, p. 97; *Dokumente*, pp. 260–1, pp. 265–6.

¹² For secondary literature on Hegel’s early treatment of Judaism, see Martin Arndt, “Hegel und das Judentum,” *Hegel Jahrbuch*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2013, pp. 28–35. Joseph Cohen, *Le Spectre juif de Hegel*, Paris: Galilée 2005. Bernard Bourgeois, “Judaïsme” in his *Hegel à Francfort ou Judaïsme, Christianisme, Hegelianisme*, Paris: Vrin 1970, pp. 35–55. Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press 1998, pp. 21–59.

¹³ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 466–70; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 586–90.

¹⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 126–38; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 167–81.

any discussion of their religion.¹⁵ The question of Hegel's disposition towards Jews in a social-political context has also been a topic of discussion in the secondary literature.¹⁶ This includes questions such as whether Hegel was anti-Semitic or what his view was on the question of Jewish rights in Prussia.

Hegel gives a brief analysis of Judaism in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.¹⁷ While there is no single extended treatment of Judaism in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, there are some scattered comments touching on it, including some brief mentions of Hebrew poetry.¹⁸ In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel dedicates a concise section to Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages but omits giving an analysis of either Judaism as a specific religion or the Old Testament *per se*.¹⁹

His most detailed account of Judaism, of course, comes from his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where he dubs it "the religion of sublimity."²⁰ His account there is a complex one since he continually changed his mind about the placement of Judaism vis-à-vis the Greek religion.²¹ Originally in his 1821

¹⁵ Hegel, *PR*, § 102; *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 160. *PR*, § 270n; *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 354n. *PR*, § 358; *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 455.

¹⁶ See Emil L. Fackenheim, "Hegel and 'The Jewish Problem,'" in *The Philosopher as Witness: Fackenheim and Responses to the Holocaust*, ed. by Michael L. Morgan and Benjamin Pollock, Albany: State University of New York Press 2008, pp. 15–25. Michael Mack, "The Metaphysics of Eating: Jewish Dietary Laws and Hegel's Social Theory," in his *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2003, pp. 42–62. Ivan Kalmar, "The Sublime is not Enough: The Hard Orientalism of G.W.F. Hegel," in his *Early Orientalism: Imagined Islam and the Notion of Sublime Power*, New York: Routledge 2012, pp. 76–87. Shlomo Avineri, "A Note of Hegel's Views on Jewish Emancipation," *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1963, pp. 145–51. Steven B. Smith, "Hegel and the Jewish Question: In between Tradition and Modernity," *History of Political Thought*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1991, pp. 87–106. Lawrence S. Stepelevich, "Hegel and Judaism," *Judaism*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1975, pp. 215–24. Eric v. d. Luft, "Hegel and Judaism: A Reassessment," *Clio*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1989, pp. 361–78. Shlomo Avineri, "The Fossil and the Phoenix: Hegel and Krochmal on the Jewish Volksgeist," in *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History*, ed. by Robert L. Perkins, Albany: State University of New York Press 1984, pp. 47–63.

¹⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 195–8; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 260–4. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 332–3; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 267–8. *OW*, pp. 453–9.

¹⁸ See, for example, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 478–9; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 69.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 3, pp. 35–6; *Jub.*, vol. 19, pp. 131–2.

²⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 152–60; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 58–66. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 423–54; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 323–53. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 669–87; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 561–79. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 738–42; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 625–8. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 170–219; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 46–95. *RGI*, pp. 55–110.

²¹ Although he does not refer to the changes of the placement of Judaism in the lectures, Rosenkranz notes Hegel's lifelong struggle with the correct conceptual understanding of this religion. See Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, p. 49: "Hegel's Ansicht der Jüdischen Geschichte ist zu verschiedenen Zeiten sehr ungleich gewesen. Sie hat ihn eben so heftig von sich abgestoßen als gefesselt und als ein finsternes Räthsel ihn Lebenslang gequält. Bald, wie in der Phänomenologie, ignorirte er sie; bald, wie in der Rechtsphilosophie, rückte er sie dicht an den Germanischen Geist heran; bald, wie in der Religionsphilosophie, coordinirte er sie als die unmittelbare Form der geistigen Individualität der Griechischen und Römischen; endlich, in der Philosophie der Geschichte, integrierte er sie dem Persischen Reich. Nach jeder dieser Seiten hin liegt

and 1824 lectures he placed Judaism first and the Greek religion second.²² However, in his 1827 lectures he reverses this and moves the Greek religion to the lower stage. Then, finally, in his 1831 lectures, he changes his mind again and relegates Judaism even further back in the hierarchy, placing it between Zoroastrianism and the Egyptian religion, which is consistent with his placement of the Jewish people historically in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.²³ Signs of this uncertainty can be seen in the edition edited by Marheineke, where Judaism is placed first and the Greek religion second. In this edition Hegel often compares the two religions in a way that seems favorable to Judaism, although it appears at a lower stage.²⁴ Moreover, as has been seen in the previous chapter, when Hegel wishes to make the transition from the Egyptian religion to the religions of spirit, he uses the myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx to represent this movement, but this implies a movement from the Egyptian religion to the Greek religion and not to Judaism, which plays no role in the story. Hegel's reasons for these changes will need to be examined by exploring what he takes to be the relative strengths and weaknesses of the conception of the divine in these religions as well.

It is conceivable that the problem became evident as Hegel subsequently continued with his lectures and went on to treat the Roman religion. The transition from the Greeks to the Romans was a natural one, which Hegel presumably did not want to interrupt by inserting an account of Judaism between them. Thus he was faced with the choice of placing Judaism before the Greeks or after the Romans, but the latter was clearly problematic given the historical connection between Rome and Christianity. The greater antiquity of Judaism perhaps persuaded him to move it back in the sequence and to place it before the Greek religion. Then the question arose about where Judaism stood vis-à-vis the Egyptian religion. Perhaps one of the reasons why he places the Egyptian religion higher in his 1831 lectures is that the Egyptians had a concept of personal immortality, whereas the Jews did not. In any case, it seems evident that the complexity of the Jewish religion made it difficult for him to find a clear and satisfying solution.

in der Geschichte der Juden eine Berechtigung, allein erst die Zusammenfassung aller derselben zur Einheit kann befriedigen."

²² See the useful overview of the lectures in the different years in the "Editorial Introduction," LPR, vol. 2, pp. 88–9.

²³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 195–8; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 260–4.

²⁴ See, for example, Hegel, *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 170; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 46. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 172; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 47. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 179; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 54. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 184; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 58. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 187; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 61.

8.1. HEGEL'S SOURCES

With regard to Hegel's sources, it is difficult to delimit the works that he was familiar with since his study of Judaism was more or less a lifelong undertaking. As a student of theology in Tübingen, Hegel learned Hebrew and studied in detail the primary texts of the Old Testament. His library thus contains a number of standard reference works of the time such as Hebrew grammars and dictionaries.²⁵ Moreover, he owned a number of books that treated the Old Testament as a whole or specific books.²⁶ In his account of Judaism in his lectures, he does not mention any sources directly except of course the Old Testament texts themselves.

One of Hegel's sources of inspiration for his analysis of Judaism may well have been Herder's work, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*.²⁷ This book, the first part of which appears in dialogue form, is far more ambitious than its title might suggest. In fact, it is a detailed study of large parts of the Old Testament. It also attempts to understand Judaism as an "oriental" religion and contains a number of comparisons with other Eastern religions. The characterization of the poetry of the Old Testament as "sublime" is a constant motif in the work and thus anticipates Hegel's characterization of Judaism as the "religion of sublimity."²⁸ Herder's work was presumably sympathetic to Hegel in that it was one of the first to try to understand the Old Testament in relation to the history and culture of other Near Eastern peoples. Hegel might also have read Herder's chapter on the Jews in *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.²⁹ Very much in line with Hegel's view, Herder also here looks at the Old Testament in relation to the sacred texts of other Eastern cultures.³⁰

²⁵ For example, Friedrich Uhlemann, *Hebräische Sprachlehre*, Berlin: T.H. Riemann 1827 (*Hegel's Library*, 336). Johann Severin Vater, *Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache. Erster Kurs für den Anfang der Erlernung*, 3rd ed., Leipzig: Friedrich Christian Wilhelm Vogel 1816 (*Hegel's Library*, 334).

²⁶ For Hegel's sources see the "Editorial Introduction" in *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 9, pp. 19–21, pp. 48–51, pp. 69–71, pp. 79–82. He owned, in addition to the other works mentioned here, copies of two works that treat Judaism in its historical context, but the date of publication of these works is too late to have had any significant influence on his lectures: Carl Peter W. Gramberg, *Kritische Geschichte der Religionsideen des alten Testaments*, vols 1–2, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1829–30 (*Hegel's Library*, 339–40). Ferdinand Heinrich Müller, *De rebus semitarum dissertatio historico-geographica*, Berlin: Enslin 1831 (*Hegel's Library*, 1078).

²⁷ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie. Eine Anleitung für die Liebhaber derselben und der ältesten Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes*, vols 1–2, Leipzig: Johann Philipp Haugs Wittwe 1787. English translation: *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vols 1–2, trans. by James Marsh, Burlington: Edward Smith 1833.

²⁸ See, for example, Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 55. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 60.

²⁹ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vols 1–4, Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1784–91, vol. 3, pp. 104–21. (English translation: *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vols 1–2, trans. by T. Churchill, 2nd ed., London: J. Johnson 1803, vol. 2, pp. 73–86.)

³⁰ Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, pp. 113f. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 80.)

Hegel owned a copy of the second edition of *Einleitung ins Alte Testament* by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827).³¹ This demonstrates that he was familiar with the debates concerning the different sources of the Pentateuch. While Hegel does not enter into a discussion of these philological issues in his lectures, he was aware of their implications for the understanding of the history of the Jewish people and their religion. He presumably found attractive Eichhorn's attempt at a broader understanding of Jewish culture that was not confined by the strictures of dogma. It is also possible that Hegel knew of the journal that Eichhorn published, the *Repertorium für Biblische und Morgenländische Litteratur*, which was published between 1777 and 1786.³²

Hegel owned a Hebrew dictionary and grammar by the orientalist Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842),³³ who from 1810 was a Professor of Theology at the University of Halle, a Prussian university near Berlin. It is also quite possible that he was familiar with Gesenius' detailed study of the Book of Isaiah, *Philologisch-kritischer und historiker Commentar über den Jesaia*, from 1821.³⁴ Gesenius' *Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache und Schrift* from 1815 must also be regarded as a possible source of information for Hegel.³⁵ In this work the author offers further support of de Wette's view about Deuteronomy. Gesenius tried to free the study of the Old Testament from theological dogma and regard the texts from a purely scholarly perspective.

8.2. GOD AS ONE

The fundamental conception of the divine in Judaism is, according to Hegel, that of a singular, infinitely powerful subject. The claim that there is one god is a recognition of a need for a single truth. The idea that there are many

³¹ Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament*, vols 1–3, 2nd ed., Reutlingen: Grözingen 1790 (*Hegel's Library*, 341–3). (Note that there is another second edition of this work published in Leipzig by Weidmanns Erben und Reich in 1787.)

³² *Repertorium für Biblische und Morgenländische Litteratur*, vols 1–18 [ed. by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn], Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich 1777–86.

³³ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Neues hebräische-deutsches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament mit Einschluss des biblischen Chaldaismus*, Leipzig: Friedrich Christian Wilhelm Vogel 1815 (*Hegel's Library*, 337). Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches Elementarbuch*, vols 1–2, Halle: Renger 1828 (vol. 1 = *Hebräische Grammatik*, Neunte Auflage; vol. 2 = *Hebräisches Lesebuch, mit Anmerkungen und einem erklärenden Wortregister*, Fünfte verbesserte Auflage) (*Hegel's Library*, 338). See John Rogerson, "Wilhelm Gesenius, 1786–1842," in his *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1985, pp. 50–7. Rudolf Haym, *Gesenius. Eine Erinnerung für seine Freunde*, Berlin: Rudolph Gaertner 1842.

³⁴ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Philologisch-kritischer und historischer Commentar über den Jesaia*, vols 1.1, 1.2, 2, Leipzig: Friedrich Christian Wilhelm Vogel 1821.

³⁵ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache und Schrift. Eine philologisch-historische Einleitung in die Sprachlehren und Wörterbücher der hebräischen Sprache*, Leipzig: Friedrich Christian Wilhelm Vogel 1815.

different gods represents a form of relativism. That there can only be one true god means that there can be only one absolute truth.³⁶ Hegel describes this as follows, "Here the absolute, or God, subsists as the One, as subjectivity, as universal and pure subjectivity, or conversely this subjectivity that is the universal inwardly is precisely the one inwardly determined unity of God."³⁷ The idea of god as a single, unitary being is important for the development of God as spirit. A single god is distinguished from multiple gods as in different forms of polytheism. Moreover, a single god has a different relation to the universe since he alone is responsible for everything and not just for specific forces of nature.

While there have been examples of this singularity in other religions, such as Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, the conception of the divine is higher in Judaism. In contrast to both the Persian and the Chinese god, the God of Judaism is a personal deity, a subject, and not an object of nature. Similarly, the Brāhma of Hinduism is a force of nature but not a self-conscious person.³⁸ Thus Hegel speaks of Brāhma as "substance." By contrast, the God of the Jews, "Yahweh" or "Jehovah" is conceived not as substance but rather as a self-conscious subject. This marks an advance over nature since it recognizes the divine as spirit.

One key advance in Judaism is that the divine is conceived as the object of thought and not the object of sense. While Hinduism and Zoroastrianism always had a concrete object of nature in which the divine manifested itself, Jehovah does not appear to the senses.³⁹ For Hegel, this means that the concept of the divine has finally begun to emancipate itself from a dependence on nature. Given this, one would expect Hegel to have a more sympathetic view of Islam, which shares this feature with Judaism.

The shift to God as spirit marks a major advance in the development of the world religions. The previous religions of the East were all focused on objects

³⁶ In "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate" Hegel compares Judaism with the Roman religion in this respect. The Romans recognize "the Lares and gods of others as Lares and gods. On the other hand, in the jealous God of Abraham and his posterity there lay the horrible claim that He alone was God and that this nation was the only one to have a god" (*TJ*, p. 248; *ETW*, p. 188).

³⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 670; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 562. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 153; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 59. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 425–6; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 325–6. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 738f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 625. See also Hegel, *PhS*, p. 466; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 586: "Spirit in the element of essence is the *form of simple oneness*."

³⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 195; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 260: "It is true that we observed at an earlier stage the pure conception 'Brahm'; but only as the universal being of nature; and with this limitation, that Brahm is not himself an object of consciousness. Among the Persians we saw this abstract being become an object of consciousness, but it was that of sensuous intuition—as light. But the idea of light has at this stage advanced to that of 'Jehovah'—the *purely One*."

³⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 426; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 325. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 671; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 563. See also *TJ*, p. 250; *ETW*, p. 192. Hegel, *PhS*, p. 466; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 586: "the relation of the eternal Being to its being-for-self is the immediately simple one of pure thought."

of sense in one way or another. By contrast, here for the first time, the focus is on the divine as an object of thought, and there is a direct hostility to conceptions of the divine in the form of objects of nature. According to Hegel, this marks a shift from oriental to occidental religious thinking: "This forms the point of separation between the East and the West; Spirit descends into the depths of its own being, and recognizes the abstract fundamental principle as the Spiritual."⁴⁰ The key shift between the religions of nature and those of spirit is the conception of the divine not as an object of nature but as a self-conscious personality: "Nature—which in the East is the primary and fundamental existence—is now relegated to the condition of a mere creature; and Spirit now occupies the first place."⁴¹ Nature is regarded as a created being that is mutable, transitory, and dependent on something higher: Spirit. Nature is just nature and is no longer thought to be animated by a higher power.⁴²

8.3. GOD AS INTERVENING IN NATURE: SUBLIMITY

God creates the universe and is absolute master of it. Unlike the Greek gods whose power is limited and for whom there is a higher sphere of necessity that even they are subject to, Jehovah is Himself above the realm of nature. He can intervene in it and control it. This is the aspect of his action that is understood as miracles.⁴³ Hegel claims that other religions, such as Hinduism, have no conception of miracles since they have a chaotic and confused conception of nature. A miracle can only make sense if nature is regarded as more or less stable and predictable. Miracles are conceived as something extraordinary that happens against this background of stability. Hegel explains, "A miracle is a singular appearance of God in or upon one of these natural and understandable things. His appearing in or upon such a thing is contrary both to the character of the thing and to the concept of God himself."⁴⁴ The world is governed by cause and effect relations that constitute the normal condition of things with which one is familiar. Miracles, however, contradict this natural order and the specific nature of the objects or entities involved. It is not in the nature of the Red Sea to part and allow people to pass; it is not in the nature of

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 195; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 260.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Hegel, *TJ*, p. 247; *ETW*, pp. 187: "The whole world Abraham regarded as simply his opposite; if he did not take it to be a nullity, he looked on it as sustained by the God who was alien to it. Nothing in nature was supposed to have any part in God; everything was simply under God's mastery."

⁴³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 431–2; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 331. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 676f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 568f.

⁴⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 431–2; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 331.

a wooden staff to be transformed into a serpent or of a rock to produce water. These are disruptions of the character of the natural world.

Miracles are special or ad hoc cases of God's relation to the world, but His usual relation Hegel characterizes as "sublimity" (*Erhabenheit*).⁴⁵ This is the key term that Hegel uses to designate Judaism as a religion generally. He describes the point of this as follows:

Sublimity is the idea that expresses or manifests itself, but in such a way that in thus appearing in or upon reality it at the same time shows itself as sublime, exalted above this appearance and reality, so that the reality is simultaneously posited as negated, and the emerging idea is exalted above that in or upon which it appears.⁴⁶

This represents a contrast to, for example the Greek religion, where the divine represent the forces of nature. In this Greek sense the divine are still on a par with nature, whereas the God of Judaism is beyond the entire natural sphere.

It may seem to be a contradiction to say that God manifests himself in nature but yet is somehow above nature. The Greek gods also manifest themselves in nature, and so why are they different from Jehovah? According to Hegel, Jehovah's manifestations are always inadequate. He simply uses the forces of nature for his own end, but He is far greater than the individual manifestations themselves. There is more to God than simply the individual miracles that He performs in the world. This is different from the Greek gods which are also immediately associated with the natural forces: Helios is a god and the sun at the same time, and Poseidon is the ocean.

God, for Judaism, is sublime since He is above nature or outside the entire sphere of cause and effect. He can at any time intervene in nature and make use of the forces of nature at will. Hegel takes the account of the creation in Genesis as an example: "The Greek author Longinus quotes from the very beginning the first Book of Moses: 'God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.' This is one of the most sublime passages."⁴⁷ God simply needs to say something for it to be realized. God performs monumental feats, and the complete ease with which He does so demonstrates His absolute sublimity. One might contrast this to the limited power of the Greek gods; for example, the god Hephaestus must physically create weapons for the other gods with a hammer, anvil, and a pair of tongs. This is far from sublime.

⁴⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 677; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 569.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 432; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 332.

⁴⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 433; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 332. Hegel refers to this passage in Genesis as quoted in the work *On the Sublime* by an unknown author, sometimes referred to as the Pseudo-Dionysius. According to Rosenkranz, the young Hegel made a translation of this work. See Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, p. 10. Dionysius Longinus, *De sublimitate*, ed. by Samuel Friedrich Nathanael Morus based on the text of Zachary Pearce, Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich 1769, see pp. 50ff., Chapter 9.9 (*Hegel's Library*, 449).

On this point Hegel may well have been inspired by Herder's work, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, which also focuses on the concept of sublimity in Judaism. Herder uses the same example, writing, like "an eastern king," God

sits enthroned in the heavens, and commands the creation of the world by a word. . . . "God said let there be light, and there was light." This sublime language of God becomes in various ways, in the poetry of the Hebrews, the form for the most concise and forcible images, in which the style always is, "He spoke, and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast."⁴⁸

For Herder there is a parallelism between the heavens and the earth that constitutes a constant motif in the Old Testament. With this, Hebrew poetry "was led to compare the finite and the infinite, and to contrast immensity with nothingness. All that is fair, grand and sublime, is, in the imagination of the Orientals, heavenly, the low, weak, and insignificant is placed in the dust of the earth."⁴⁹ Thus the sublimity of God is contrasted to the destitution and impoverished nature of mundane existence.

Hegel goes on to hint at a contrast with the god of light in Zoroastrianism: "But there is nothing that costs as little effort as a word; as soon as it is spoken, it is gone. Yet this breath [of God] is here light as well, the world of light, the infinite outpouring of light, so that light here becomes merely a word, something as transient as a mere word."⁵⁰ While the light in Zoroastrianism was the divine itself, here in Judaism the light is relegated to something that God has absolute control over and can create with a simple word. Hegel exemplifies this sublime character of Jehovah with a couple of different passages in Psalm 104:

God is also pictured as using wind and lightning for his servants and messengers. "Thou makest the winds thine angels," and so on. What God needs is realized, but in such a way that it is merely an instrument; thus nature is obedient to him This is what sublimity is—that nature is represented in this wholly negated, subordinate, transitory fashion.⁵¹

With the character of sublimity the God of Judaism represents a radical break with nature. Jehovah can effect anything at all in the natural world that He wishes without the slightest of effort.

The idea of God as sublime is important since it serves to distinguish the God of Judaism from other gods. When we think of the word "sublime," we

⁴⁸ Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 56. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 61. See also Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 26. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 54. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 59.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 433; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 333.

⁵¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 433f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 333.

tend to think of terms such as “majestic,” “elevated,” or “exalted.” These are all concepts of thought and not objects of sense. Thus to say that something is sublime is to appeal to thought. This contrasts with the Greek gods which are more limited in power and continuous with nature. The Greek gods are presented to sense perception in the Greek works of art, where they are portrayed. Thus this is an appeal to sense and not to thought. Since the God of Judaism is a God of thought, there are no images of Him. In the Old Testament the Jews are often portrayed as falling away from faith and worshipping a bull or golden calf, which was intended to be a physical representation of God.⁵² This clearly has associations with different pagan gods in the other religions of the Near East, where bulls were worshipped, for example, the apis bull in Egypt. The golden calf is a statue, a concrete representation to sense perception. This was regarded as sacrilegious to the Jews, and thus in the Old Testament a conflict is portrayed between those who wish to worship the golden calf and those who wish to worship Jehovah. In this conflict one sees a conception of God as a part of nature vying with a more advanced conception of God as spirit, as something beyond nature and beyond sense perception and representation. Jehovah is sublime, while the golden calf is still a continuous part of nature just like the worship of sacred cows in Hinduism or cats and apes in the Egyptian religion.

8.4. GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE WORLD

Since God is wise, He created the universe with a specific plan. In Hegel's analysis, this topic is divided into three parts, the first, second, and third determination, representing the different aspects of the divine plan.⁵³ The first concerns God's goal to be recognized as God by the chosen people. The second goal is to establish law and morality among the people, and in connection with this the third goal concerns the creation of human beings as creatures higher than the rest of creation, and this involves the origin of evil and the original sin.

8.4.1. Recognition

The first determination represents the general goal of the universe. God can make miracles happen in the realm of nature, but this is not His ultimate goal, which must be found in something higher than nature. According to this first

⁵² Exodus 32:4, 1 Kings 12:28–9.

⁵³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 434ff.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 333ff.

determination, God's purpose is simply to be known by human beings and to be recognized as God. In order for God to be who He is, that is, a self-conscious subject, He must be recognized by other self-conscious subjects. God is reflected in the minds of the believers. Thus He is known:

The true purpose and its realization do not fall within nature as such, but essentially within consciousness instead. Purpose manifests itself in nature, but its essential appearance is its appearing within consciousness as in its reflection; it appears reflectively in self-consciousness in such a way that its purpose is to become known by consciousness, and for consciousness the purpose is to acknowledge it.⁵⁴

In order for God to be God, He must be known and acknowledged as such.

While God is distinguished from Creation, this is not enough to determine Him as a self-conscious subject. Now He is determined by being recognized by other self-conscious subjects, and thus He is fully determined as subject. It is God's essential appearance to be for self-consciousness. Again, Hegel's idea is that a thing is what it is only in its relations to other things. It is precisely these relations which determine what it is: "The way in which one human being is related to another—that is just what is human, that is human nature itself."⁵⁵ Then it is added, "The acid is nothing else than the specific mode of its relation to the base—that is the nature of the acid itself."⁵⁶ This theory of determination is mirrored by a theory of recognition. A self-conscious entity is what it is only vis-à-vis other self-conscious subjects.

Although there is a form of recognition that takes place here, this is still abstract for Hegel. He explains, "The oriental religions, and the Hebrew, too, stop short at the still abstract concept of God and of spirit (as is done even by the Enlightenment which wants to know only of God the Father); for God the Father, by himself, is the God who is shut up within himself, the abstract god, therefore not yet the spiritual, not yet the true God."⁵⁷ Since God is merely the object of thought or consciousness (and not sense perception), He is not fully determinate. This only comes when God appears in actuality, not partially and inadequately via ad hoc miracles, but fully in the form of spirit, i.e., Jesus Christ. Although Judaism is at once extolled for being higher than the religions of nature since it avoids the natural element that is available to sense, it still needs this element in a higher form to be further developed. Further determination requires the abstract God to become concrete.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 679; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 570f. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 435; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 334.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 674; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 566.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 674n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 566n.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 384, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 38.

8.4.2. Morality

While the first determination represents the general goal or end, the second determination represents God's practical end. According to this, God's purpose is to establish morality and law and to have human beings follow it: "So this essential purpose is in the first place ethical life or uprightness, namely, that all human beings should keep legality or right in mind in whatever they do."⁵⁸ Here Hegel of course refers to the giving of the Ten Commandments and the numerous other Jewish laws and ordinances. This represents an important developmental step since the individual is enjoined to reflect upon morality and to bring his inward moral being into harmony with the universal law. It was precisely this inward dimension that was lacking in the previous religions.

The belief is that by acting in accordance with the divine commands and laws, one will find favor with God, and He will see to it that all goes well for the righteous person. Hegel examines how the Book of Job addresses this issue.⁵⁹ Job is a righteous person, but yet he suffers terrible losses. He argues for his innocence and cannot understand why God would allow him to suffer as if he had committed some crime. How is it that he, a righteous man, is made to suffer, while many unrighteous men prosper? After Job's lament and long discussions with his friends, God speaks to him and reproaches him for his presumption. A long list of God's extraordinary deeds is recounted, and Job is left entirely humbled and contrite, acknowledging that he, a mere mortal, is in no position to know or understand all the workings of God. Only with this recognition does he find favor with God again and is his wealth and former life restored to him. For Hegel, this account provides useful information about the importance of the moral dimension in Judaism. Job's expectation that God should help the righteous and punish the sinners is evidence of the belief that moral and just humans should be happy. It is thought that God's power and wisdom should serve to realize this end.

This idea of the morality of the individual as God's purpose is expanded also to mean the morality of the people as a whole. Here Hegel points out that God has selected a specific family and a specific people for his protection.⁶⁰ It is the cultivation of this relation that is also an important part of God's practical end. Hegel explains that there is something of an oddity about this:

⁵⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 679; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 571.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 446f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 346. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 681f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 573. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 741; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 627f. Herder also has an extended account of the Book of Job in his *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, pp. 89–149. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 80–121.

⁶⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 436; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 335.

On the one hand God is universal, the God of heaven and of earth, the God of all humanity, absolute wisdom, and universal power; on the other hand, his purpose and operation in the spiritual world are so limited as to be confined to just this one family, just this one people. All peoples are called upon to recognize him and glorify his name, but the actual work that is really brought about is a limited one—just this people, in its conditioned existence, its inner, outer political, and ethical determinacy.⁶¹

Hegel points out that there is a contradiction in the fact that Jehovah is conceived to be an all-powerful creator of the entire universe, but then is ultimately only concerned with a single people and its fate. For Hegel, this goal is overly specific or particular. Why would God create the entire universe only in order to benefit a select group of people in one tiny corner of it?

This same oddity is reflected in another feature of Judaism. A part of God's protection and cultivation of the chosen people is also the designation of a promised land, a territory divinely given to the people.⁶² God grants the Jews a special place to live and this is their reward for obedience. For Hegel, this end is also overly specific. If God created the entire universe, it seems somewhat odd that He would be so concerned about a small area of land in the Middle East. Again Hegel tacitly anticipates the universality of Christianity as the solution to this problem. Christianity makes an appeal to all human beings and not just to a chosen people. It promises a universal kingdom of heaven and not a specific piece of land.

8.4.3. Evil and the Original Sin

The third determination of God's purpose with the universe concerns the original sin.⁶³ Hegel also treats this topic elsewhere in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.⁶⁴ It is further touched upon briefly in the "Religion" chapter of the *Phenomenology*⁶⁵ and in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.⁶⁶ Moreover, Hegel examines this issue in his lectures on logic and political philosophy, and these discussions were introduced into his published works of the *Encyclopedia Logic*⁶⁷ and the *Philosophy of Right*⁶⁸ by the editors

⁶¹ Ibid. ⁶² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 437; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 337.

⁶³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 438–40; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 338–42. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 740f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 626f. Herder also has an extended account of the Fall in his *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, pp. 150–200. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 122–59.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 239–49; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 145–54. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 101–8; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 38–44. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 207–11; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 139–42. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 300–4; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 224–8.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 468–70; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 588–90.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 321–3; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 412–15.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *EL*, § 24, Addition 3; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 91–7.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *PR*, § 18, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 70.

of the collected works edition, where they appear as *Zusätze* or additions to the Hegel's original text. Given this, it seems clear that this was a highly significant discussion for Hegel that has relevance for fields far beyond the philosophy of religion.

In polytheism or dualistic religions the existence and origin of evil is not a problem since it can simply be ascribed to an evil deity who works in opposition to a good one, as in the case with Zoroastrianism.⁶⁹ But the problem arises in monotheism where there is only a single god who is made responsible for the creation of the entire universe. If such a god is good, then he would not have created a universe with evil in it. If he is omnipotent, then he could have prevented evil from arising. So the problem remains about how to explain the existence of evil in a monotheism that has a conception of a benevolent and omnipotent god.

The story of the Fall in Genesis attempts to explain the origin of evil, and Hegel gives his own interpretation of the story. The original state is conceived to be one in which humanity is in complete harmony with the natural world. Human beings lived in innocence, not knowing that they were naked. They existed immediately at peace with their natural surroundings. They did not know death, hard work, or labor in childbirth, which were not part of the original condition but only later punishments imposed after the original sin. Humans were likewise immediately in harmony with God. No alienation with the divine had arisen since this too only takes place with original sin: "As regards [Spirit's] practical side, as regards its will, it still remained in the region of happy faith, was still in the state of innocence, and was absolutely good."⁷⁰ Thus Adam and Eve are created in the image of God and as such as good. Their actions are immediate consequences of their nature, and there is no internal division or struggle in their will between different courses of action or different kinds of behavior.

For Hegel, this pristine picture captures a basic truth but at the same time is based on a misunderstanding. First, it shows that there is a unity or harmony between human beings and God; humans are created in God's image. It recognizes that there is something divine in humanity.⁷¹ The unity is the divine rational element in each human being. There is thus a fundamental truth about the human condition that the idea of an original harmony captures:

The basic determination is nothing else but this, that the human being is no natural essence as such, is no animal, but rather spirit. Insofar as humanity is spirit, it has this universality in itself quite generally, the universality of rationality, the activity of concrete thought and reason; and it is partly the instinct of

⁶⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 740; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 626.

⁷¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 522; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 419f.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

reason, and partly its development, to know that reason is universal and that nature is therefore rational.⁷²

Humans have the ability to think and discern the universal. This is the divine mark of spirit. This is what unites us with God.

But, according to Hegel, there is also a distortion involved in the biblical account. While it is true that humans are in harmony with the divine, this is not something that should be regarded as an original condition that has been lost. Rather, human beings must realize their freedom by a process of alienation and reconciliation. Thus the true condition of harmony is not one that lies in immediacy at some point in the remote past, but rather the result of alienation and reconciliation, which is the process on the long road of mediation. The harmonious original state portrayed in the story is not a human condition. Rather, humans must go beyond it in order to develop themselves fully as human beings.

Hegel then turns to the narrative of the story of the Fall. He gives the following gloss on the story presented in Genesis chapters 2–3:

It is Adam or humanity as such who appears in this story; what is related here concerns the nature of humanity itself. And it is not a childish, formal commandment that God lays upon him; the tree from which Adam is forbidden to eat is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And this being so, the externality and form of a tree falls away. Adam eats of it and attains knowledge of good and evil. The difficult point, however, is that we are told that God forbade humanity to acquire this knowledge. For this knowledge is precisely what constitutes the character of spirit. Spirit is spirit only through consciousness, and the highest consciousness lies precisely in such knowledge. How then can this have been forbidden? Cognition or knowledge is this two-sided, dangerous gift; spirit is free, and this freedom embraces good and evil. This is the negative counterpart to the affirmative side of freedom.⁷³

Hegel notes that there is something odd about the divine command that forbids humans from learning the difference between good and evil. Knowledge of this difference is required for humans to be truly free and to be able to make free decisions about how to act in the world. Thus with the knowledge of good and evil comes freedom and simultaneously responsibility. But what the biblical story correctly captures is that freedom is a dangerous thing since when people are given knowledge of good and evil, there will always be some who will choose evil. This is what is to be lamented about this new situation. The price of freedom is the existence of evil. Hegel explains that it does not make sense to ascribe freedom to human beings before the Fall and in the

⁷² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 524; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 421f.

⁷³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 439n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 339n. See also Hegel, *EL*, § 24, Addition 3; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 93f.

absence of this knowledge. Freedom is precisely to have the knowledge of good and evil and to act rationally and choose the good based on that knowledge. But if there is no knowledge, then there is no choice and thus no freedom.⁷⁴

Echoes of this assessment can also be found in Herder, where one of the characters in his dialogue on Jewish poetry says, "The knowledge of good and evil means, in the language of the East . . . prudence, discretion. It is commonly predicated of those years, in which a man comes to understanding, or it denotes one's moral judgment, his capacity for the exercise of this, in short, his practical understanding."⁷⁵ Herder emphasizes the way in which the story highlights the difference between human beings and the animals. Since animals act immediately in accordance with their nature, it would make sense for the snake to act on his desire and eat of the tree; but since human beings are different, their action carries a moral quality that makes them culpable when they perform the same action.⁷⁶ Like Hegel, Herder interprets the story as the natural development of the human capacity to be free and fully human. The interlocutors in Herder's dialogue reach the conclusion that God had planned the whole thing, knowing full well that Adam and Eve would defy the prohibition just as a parent knows that a small child will. But with the father's subsequent punishment, the child learns and grows, just as the first humans did.⁷⁷ Both Hegel and Herder emphasize that the story of the Fall presents an important picture of human nature. Evil is not something external but something internal: "The serpent, which seduces us, too, is always there, and always tempting—[he is] the inclinations of the sense and of our sensual nature . . ."⁷⁸ The serpent thus represents the drives and desires that constitute the natural part of every human being, but which must be overcome in civilized life. The story of the Fall is the "progressive story of humanity" that explains how humans developed from being animals to becoming fully human.⁷⁹

Hegel compares the Jewish conception of the origin of evil with that of the ancient Persians. In Zoroastrianism, the principles of good and evil were conceived to exist in the world ahead of time and are represented by the two

⁷⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 321; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 412f.: "There is a deep truth that evil lies in consciousness: for animals are neither evil nor good, the merely natural man quite as little. Consciousness occasions the separation of the ego, in its boundless freedom as arbitrary choice, from the pure essence of the will—i.e., from the Good."

⁷⁵ Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 163. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 132.

⁷⁶ Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 165. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 133.

⁷⁷ Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 175. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 140.

⁷⁸ Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 176. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 140.

⁷⁹ Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. 1, p. 175. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 140.

deities Ormuzd and Ahriman. This external dualism now with Judaism becomes something subjective and is located in the self-consciousness of the individual: "The Oriental antithesis of Light and Darkness is transferred to Spirit, and the Darkness becomes sin."⁸⁰ All human beings have the principles of both good and evil in their will itself. Evil is not some preexisting thing in the world but rather the result of the human will. This transfer from something external to something internal is symbolically represented by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, an external object in the world, the fruit of which is eaten and thus becomes internal. The conception of good and evil being something inward represents a clear advance in the development of subjective freedom since it recognizes a far greater role of the individual.

It lies in the nature of humanity that it must develop and raise itself out of its natural condition. In order to do so, it must step out of the purported unity with nature and grasp something higher, that is, the rational element in its own nature. In their natural condition, humans are thus not yet what they are destined to be. Rather, they are undeveloped potential:

As a state of existence, that initial natural oneness is in actuality not a state of innocence but the state of savagery, an animal state, a state of [natural] desire or general wildness. The animal in such a state is neither good nor evil; but human beings in the animal state are wild, are evil, are not as they ought to be. Humanity as it is by nature is not what it ought to be; human beings ought to be what they are through spirit, to which end they mold themselves by inner illumination, by knowing and willing what is right and proper.⁸¹

Because humans have the ability to become rational and free, they can be regarded as "wild" and "evil" in an early condition where these faculties are not yet developed. By contrast, these abilities will never develop in animals, and so no judgment can be made about them. Moral categories simply do not apply.

In the story of the Fall the split and alienation from nature is portrayed as something accidental and unfortunate. According to this view, it is a regrettable accident that Adam and Eve acted in the way they did, but different people might well have acted differently, and the original sin might never have taken place. Since Adam and Eve were full of pride and defiance, the entire human race is condemned. But this is a mistaken conception, according to Hegel:

[W]e must give up the superficial notion that original sin has its ground only in a contingent action of the first human pair. It is part of the concept of spirit, in fact, that man is by nature evil; and we must not imagine that this could be otherwise. The relationship [of man to nature] in which man is a natural being, and behaves

⁸⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 323; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 414f.

⁸¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 527; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 424.

as such, is one that ought not to be. Spirit is to be free and is to be what it is through itself. Nature is, for man, only the starting point that he ought to transform.⁸²

But, for Hegel, the story of the Fall is not something accidental or arbitrary; rather, it represents a universal truth about human beings when it is divested of its mythological trappings and understood correctly. The truth behind this story is that humans must come out of the natural state and become spirit. For Hegel, however, the ability to do evil lies in the very nature of human consciousness and is what makes freedom and morality possible in the first place. Humans must learn to overcome their natural drives and desires and to act in accordance with their higher nature.

God and human beings are spirit and thus free. The story of Genesis recounts the coming to awareness of this freedom in human beings. In the narrative, it is recounted that the serpent tempts Adam and Eve by saying that if they eat of the tree, they will become like God. For Hegel, this is a key feature of the story. God is already self-conscious, already knowing the difference between good and evil. Humans, however, are like children or animals, acting only by immediate instinct. However, after the Fall they indeed become like God since they become self-conscious; they realize that they are naked and thus can see themselves from the perspective of the other. This brings humans to a certain extent to the same level as God: both are self-conscious agents, and both are spirit. The knowledge gained by Adam and Eve is recognized as being something divine.⁸³

This picture of the original state of human beings is positive. The idea is that this is the way things are supposed to be. It is a period that later people look upon with nostalgia and longing, an occasion to lament the corruption and immorality of the present day. One yearns for the lost paradise and the immediate natural harmony that once existed but has now been destroyed. Hegel points out that when people talk about the earliest period of humanity and thus the earliest form of religion, there is a tendency to posit a primordial condition that is an ideal that later generations can never attain. Here one thinks of the Greeks' conception of a golden age or Rousseau's idealized conception of the state of nature, where human beings lived in their natural

⁸² Hegel, *EL*, § 24, Addition 3; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 95–6. Translation slightly modified. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 321–2; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 413: The Fall “is no causal conception but the eternal history of spirit. . . . The Fall is therefore the eternal myth of man—in fact, the very transition by which he becomes man.”

⁸³ Hegel, *EL*, § 24, Addition 3; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 95: “But the myth does not conclude with the expulsion from paradise. It says further, ‘God said: Behold Adam is become as one of us, to know good and evil.’ Cognition is now called something divine and not, as earlier, what ought not to be. So in this story there lies also the refutation of the idle chatter about how philosophy belongs only to the finitude of spirit; philosophy is cognition, and the original calling of man, to be an image of God, can be realized only through cognition.”

simplicity before being corrupted by societal influences. One also thinks of the Romantics' interest in, for example, the culture of ancient India, which they believed represented such a harmonious natural state.

The biblical account thus laments the event of the Fall, but this is for Hegel a mistake since this movement of becoming aware of good and evil and developing human freedom is a natural part of human development. At the beginning before the Fall there was an original harmony, a position; then with the Fall there is negation; so according to Hegel's speculative logic, what is missing is the third step, the negation of the negation, which represents reconciliation. He acknowledges that this does happen to a certain limited extent in the covenant the God makes with the Jews, but this does not change the fundamental fact of sin and the punishments delivered for it. To make this fundamental change, something more radical is required: Christianity.

Hegel criticizes the notion of a lost paradise in which people were closer to God. He believes this to reveal that this conception is something accidental and not necessary in human development.⁸⁴ The true meaning of the unity of humanity with nature is not that human beings should lead bovine lives. To be in harmony with nature means human beings are in harmony with their own nature. But this means to be separated from the life of immediate drives and passions. While plants and animals are at one with their nature from the beginning, humans must work to attain a harmony with theirs. They live in constant dualisms and forms of alienation which must be overcome through the use of reason. The reconciliation that comes about at the end is what is uniquely human. This mediated form of harmony is higher than the conception of an immediate harmony in paradise.

Hegel returns to the narrative of Genesis and analyzes the punishments that God meted out for eating from the forbidden tree of good and evil. The nature of the punishment—that man must work hard in order to live—also in part reflects the defect in the picture of the Fall that is presented. The punishments are of course intended to be a terrible thing for humanity; however, Hegel notes that they are at least in part something positive that distinguishes human beings from nature. He explains:

We have to acknowledge that these are the consequences of finitude, but, on the other hand the nobility of humanity is precisely to eat [bread] in the sweat of its brow and gain its sustenance for itself by its own activity, labor, and understanding. Animals have this happy lot (if it can be so termed), that nature provides them with what they need. Human beings, on the other hand, raise even what is naturally needful to them to their freedom. This is in fact the use they make of their freedom, even if it is not their highest point, which consists rather in knowing and willing the good.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 243; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 148.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 440n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 340n. See also *EL*, § 24, Addition 3; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 95.

The ability to satisfy one's natural needs and desires by one's own intelligence and labor is precisely what separates human beings from the animals and what dignifies human existence. Unlike animals, humans can work on their environment and reshape it to suit their needs. It is thus a mistake to regard this as a negative punishment; instead, it is precisely a part of what it is to be human.

According to the biblical view, humans would have been better off in the natural condition, living in harmony with nature and ignorant of good and evil. But this view would make human beings into animals. For Hegel, to be truly human, we must depart from the Garden and open up the possibility for free action, even if this means risking the possibility of evil. Without this crucial step humans would never fulfill their humanity or the notion of freedom: "For the state of innocence, the paradisiacal condition, is that of the animal. Paradise is a park, where only animals, not men, can remain."⁸⁶ According to Hegel, this myth of the Fall provides great insight into the Jews' conception of themselves and their place in the universe. Later in the Psalms the Fall is still lamented in the sense that humans remain obsessed with their sinfulness.⁸⁷ This too is evidence for Hegel that this religion is still waiting for a true reconciliation to take place.

8.4.4. The Lord and the Servant

One major shortcoming of Judaism in Hegel's eyes is that the form of recognition at work between God and the Jews is not that of free individuals, but rather represents a master and servant relation.⁸⁸ He says of the Hebrews, theirs is the "self-consciousness of the servant vis-à-vis the Lord."⁸⁹ Hegel finds in Psalm 111:10 the perfect expression for this: "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."⁹⁰ For the Jewish conception, wisdom means recognizing God's power, keeping his laws and commandments, and thus taking care to avoid His wrath.

⁸⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 321; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 413.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 321; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 412: "It is this which gives the *Jewish people* their world-historical importance and weight; for from this state of mind arose that higher phase in which Spirit came to absolute self-consciousness—passing from that alien form of being which is its discord and pain, and mirroring itself in its own essence. The state of feeling in question we find expressed most purely and beautifully in the Psalms of David, and in the Prophets; the chief burden of whose utterances is the thirst of the soul after God, its profound sorrow for its transgressions, and the desire for righteousness and holiness."

⁸⁸ This is an element of Hegel's analysis of Judaism that appears as early as his "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate." See *TJ*, pp. 251ff.; *ETW*, pp. 192ff.

⁸⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 153f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 60.

⁹⁰ See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 443; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 344. *PhS*, pp. 117f.; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 156.

Since Judaism represents the beginning of the religions of spirit and the beginning of self-consciousness, it is understandable that it corresponds to the beginning of the “Self-Consciousness” chapter in the *Phenomenology*. As is known from the lordship–bondage dialectic found in that work, there is a positive dimension to the situation of the servant. Through fear, discipline, self-denial, and abstraction from one’s natural desires and needs, the slave overcomes the natural element of his being and raises himself to a higher level by recognizing that the element of spirit is what is truly highest in him. Humans share in common with animals natural desires, and so this is not what makes us specifically human. It is the human ability not to act on these desires, but to ignore and repress them, that marks an important step in becoming fully human. Thus the fear that the slave lives with has a positive side since it constitutes a part of a larger process of liberation from nature. The fear is not something paralyzing or negative, but rather it is a *wise* fear that is liberation. Hegel explains:

This wise fear is the essential single moment of freedom and consists therefore in freeing oneself from everything particular, in breaking away from every contingent interest, in general, in feeling the negativity of everything particular. Thus it is not a particular fear of the particular but just the positing of this particular fear as null, emancipating oneself from fear.⁹¹

The slave learns to overcome his initial fear since he learns that he can control his desires with his mind. With this realization the slave removes one of the important opportunities for intimidation by the master since he can no longer be threatened by the loss of the fulfillment of his desires. This is no longer a matter of fear for him. Hegel makes a polemical allusion to Schleiermacher who makes this fear the “feeling of absolute dependence” and regards it as the basic religious instinct in everyone: “Consequently it is not at all what is termed a ‘feeling of dependence’ etc. On the contrary, this fear of the Lord sublates all dependence.”⁹² Hegel explains rather that this fear is to be conceived as something positive: “The affirmative then arises from and within this fear of the Lord; pure affirmation is nothing else but this infinite negativity, this negativity that goes back into itself.”⁹³ This is the form of liberation from the senses that leads to Stoicism in Hegel’s analysis in the *Phenomenology*, and here he also alludes to this.⁹⁴

Also as in the lordship–bondage dialectic, the slave receives more valuable recognition from the master than the other way around. The master needs the slave for the fulfillment of his needs and thus implicitly “recognizes” the

⁹¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 445n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 343n.

⁹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 443f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 344.

⁹³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 444; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 344.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 445n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 343n: “This is, for example, Stoic freedom in chains.” See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 444; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 345.

value of the slave in this capacity. Thus having his own identity in this service to the master, the slave is justified in his role as servant vis-à-vis the master. The situation is similar in Judaism. God gives commands, and the Jews must simply comply. The condition of this compliance is therefore that of servitude and fear in compliance with the covenant: "The people of God is accordingly a people adopted by covenant and contract on the conditions of fear and service."⁹⁵ Given this, it makes sense that the relation between Jehovah and the people has a legalistic character and not one of love or personal sympathy that individuals enter into based on personal inclination. Hegel explains, "Just as the obedience is not spiritually ethical but is only a determinate, blind obedience, not that of ethically free persons, so too the punishments are determined externally. The laws and commandments are merely to be carried out and executed as by servants."⁹⁶ To illustrate the tyranny of the divine, Hegel quotes a series of threats and curses from Leviticus 26:14–33, where God threatens a wide array of terrible punishments for those who transgress His laws.

In Zoroastrianism there was an open conflict between good and evil, with Ormuzd and Ahriman. In Judaism, however, God is far greater than evil, and so no struggle is necessary. God simply punishes this kind of evil without further ado. Given that the Jews regard themselves as servants or even slaves, the notion of free spirit has still not been fully developed. Hegel thus concludes that the Jews are stuck in a state of servitude: "There is no freedom up to this point, not even the freedom to investigate what is divine and eternal law. The categories of good, which are, to be sure, also categories of reason, are deemed to be prescriptions of the Lord, any infringements of which he punishes; this is the wrath of God."⁹⁷ The correct conception is a form of recognition that is freely given, but this requires a self-conception of a people that is free.

Although Jehovah is a self-conscious deity, who is more developed than the other conceptions of the divine explored so far, there is still something problematic about the Jews' conception of their God according to Hegel. As was seen in relation to Hegel's analysis of the dialectic of mutual recognition in the master–slave relation, recognition must be freely given if it is to be meaningful. People cannot be compelled to love or respect another person. If a tyrant threatens or intimidates other people effectively, they might pretend to love and respect him, but secretly they will resent and disdain him. All of their public display of love and respect will be simply empty and done out of fear and purely for show. For things like love or respect to make any sense, they must be freely given. This is the form of full recognition among free people. According to Hegel, the Jews have not yet reached this stage since their

⁹⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 157; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 63. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 449; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 348f.

⁹⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 450; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 350f.

⁹⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 452n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 352n.

God is, in a sense, a master, who does not allow them their own subjective freedom.

According to Hegel, the Jews have not yet effected the liberation from their condition of slavery. Instead, the condition of servitude undermines the development of the concept of subjective freedom. Hegel focuses on the aspect of Jehovah as the lawgiver. According to Hegel, to obey a law freely means that individuals must give their consent to it by means of their own rational evaluation and understanding of the law. There is thus a movement from a universal, for example, a law handed down by the state, to the particular, the individual will, and then finally to a unity of these two in the individual's consent and subsequent unifying of his will with the universal law. With one's rationality one can see the truth and universality of the law, and thus one is glad to consent to it. One can find one's own will reflected in the law. For Hegel, Jehovah's laws are not open for this kind of process. In issuing these laws, Jehovah is not asking for people to evaluate them and give their consent. Instead, these are absolute commands, which must be obeyed regardless of what one might think of them personally. The individual will plays no role here. Hegel explains:

This is the definition under which he (as the Lord) gives his people their laws, laws of every kind, both the universal laws, the Ten Commandments, which are the universal basic ethical and rightful foundation of lawgiving and morality and are not regarded [by them] as rationally based but as [simply] prescribed by the Lord, and also all the other political ordinances and regulations.⁹⁸

This conception of the law does not acknowledge the freedom of the individual. The law simply commands and demands obedience: "All law is given by the Lord, and hence it is positive commandment throughout. There is in it a formal, absolute authority."⁹⁹ The law is accompanied by threats about what will happen if one does not comply. So even if the law runs contrary to one's conscience or inward conviction, fear compels one to obey it.

As was seen in the account of the original sin, the source of evil is regarded to lie in human subjectivity. In other words, when humans act on their own, then they do evil. Thus they should be given clear commands which they must follow in order to prevent them from acting on their natural inclinations.¹⁰⁰ This relation makes humans into children in a sense because it does not believe that they have the ability to perceive what is right and wrong on their own and to choose what is right. Instead, such things must be dictated

⁹⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 684n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 576n.

⁹⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 685n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 576n. See also Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 198; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 262.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 685n; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 576n–577n.

to them for their own good, and the matter of consent is left out of the picture altogether.

Another natural result of this conception of human beings is that there is no doctrine of immortality in Judaism. If people keep the covenant and the laws, then God will protect them and make them prosper, but if they fail to do so, then God will fail to protect them and afflict them with numerous mundane difficulties.¹⁰¹ God's reward to the great patriarchs is not an eternal bliss in heaven but rather a prosperous life on earth for the patriarch and his family. The entire system of rewards and punishments is based in the mundane sphere.

8.5. THE TRANSITION TO THE NEXT STAGE

Hegel explains the shortcomings of this stage of religious development while anticipating the stages to come. The key lies in the development of the notion of human freedom. The Jews remain slaves as long as they are the subjects of a God who demands absolute obedience, while leaving no room for the free development of subjectivity. As long as God remains a master, humans will never conceive of themselves as free and will never develop their subjectivity to be truly free.

The path out of this dilemma lies in the notion of mutual recognition. For recognition to be meaningful, it must be freely given by both parties. The true God allows His followers to be free. Since God is Spirit, He must be subject to the dialectic of recognition just as all other self-conscious agents. This relation is what determined God's relation to His believers, and its nature can vary from one religion to the next. An important step in the development of human freedom is when humans realize that they carry within themselves something of the divine. Instead of people being regarded as having no value (as in a slave relation), in Christianity humans can see the divine in human form and realize that there is a human element in God. With this realization, the value and meaning of being human rises infinitely. This is a liberating realization that sets the stage for a completely different self-conception, which says that there is something absolutely important and valuable about every single individual person.

The key connecting link between God and humanity is the notion of Spirit. Since both God and human beings are spirit, they can stand in a relation of mutual recognition to one another. They can see themselves by means of the other: "humanity knows itself in God, and God and humanity say to one

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 160; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 65. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 685n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 577n.

another: That is spirit of my spirit, humanity is spirit like God.”¹⁰² Here Hegel plays on the passage in Genesis where God makes the first woman from Adam’s rib. When Adam sees her for the first time, he declares, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”¹⁰³ Adam recognizes a part of himself in Eve since she is made out of his rib. The key point is that Adam sees in Eve a being like himself and thus a common humanity. The dialectic of recognition can begin. While this biblical passage focuses on the physical dimension, i.e., the bone and the flesh, Hegel modifies it to focus on the *spiritual* dimension, referring to the “spirit of my spirit.” Just as Adam sees a common humanity in Eve based on their physical similarities, so also human beings see their link to God in their common spirit. This relation is what Christianity ultimately provides. The point is that this realization of a commonality with God can never be reached so long as the Jews conceive of themselves in a relation of radical separation and even enslavement vis-à-vis the divine.

¹⁰² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 457n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 357n. See also *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 410; *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 74.

¹⁰³ Genesis 2:23.

Greek Polytheism

The Religion of Beauty

Under the heading “The Religion of Beauty” Hegel treats the polytheism of ancient Greece, a topic with which he was clearly at home. He received a classical education and learned Latin and Greek from an early age.¹ He was well read in Greek literature and maintained a lifelong fascination with most all aspects of Greek culture. As a schoolboy he made translations of Longinus, Sophocles, Epictetus, and Thucydides.² He made excerpts from and summaries of the works of a large number of ancient authors, which he meticulously organized and kept for future reference.³ Some of his earliest surviving writings from his school days in Stuttgart treat Greek religion and poetry.⁴ One of these is “On Some Characteristic Distinctions of the Ancient Poets,” where the young Hegel discusses the beginning of Greek tragedy in the religious rites dedicated to Dionysus. From his time as a student in Tübingen there survives a text entitled “On Some Benefits which the Reading of Ancient Classical Greek and Roman Writers Secures for Us.”⁵ While working as a house tutor in Bern, he wrote a poem for his old friend Hölderlin with the title “Eleusis,” in reference to the famous Greek temple.⁶ In the poem he invokes the goddess Demeter (Ceres) and reflects on the vanity of modern attempts to understand the ancient gods. As headmaster of a secondary school in

¹ See Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1844, pp. 10ff. See also the useful overview of materials in H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1972, pp. 47–56.

² Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, pp. 10–12.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴ Hegel, “On the Religion of the Greeks and Romans,” *MW*, pp. 8–13; *Dokumente*, pp. 43–8. “On Some Characteristic Distinctions of the Ancient Poets,” *MW*, pp. 14–18; *Dokumente*, pp. 48–51.

⁵ Hegel, “Über einige Vorteile, welche uns die Lektüre der alten klassischen griechischen und römischen Schriftsteller gewährt,” *Dokumente*, pp. 169–72. See also Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, p. 27. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801*, pp. 75–7.

⁶ Hegel, “Eleusis,” *MW*, pp. 86–8; *Dokumente*, pp. 380–3.

Nuremberg, Hegel gave a speech, known in English under the title “On Classical Studies,” in which he outlines the importance of Greek and Latin not only for an understanding of the ancient cultures but also for logical thinking.⁷ Given all this, it is unsurprising that his treatment of the Greek religion is very positive in many aspects. In the “Bern Fragments” he compares the Greek religion favorably to Christianity on a couple of different points.⁸

In addition to the account given in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,⁹ Hegel also gives analyses of the Greek religion in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,¹⁰ the *Lectures on Aesthetics*,¹¹ and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹² In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* there is a long section on Greek philosophy, which is of relevance for his understanding of religion.¹³ Despite the importance of the Greek religion for Hegel, there is a surprising paucity of secondary literature on the topic.

The Greek religion shares with Judaism the idea that the divine is a self-conscious entity, and thus both represent religions of spirit. However, they differ from one another in important respects, not least of which is the contrast between polytheism and monotheism. Moreover, for Judaism, God was an object of thought and not of sense, and for this reason there were no images or representations of Him. By contrast, it is, according to Hegel, one of the fundamental aspects of the Greek gods that they are represented in art. Thus, the account of the Greek religion in the *Phenomenology* is entitled, “Religion in the Form of Art” and in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, “The Religion of Beauty.” While the art works of the Egyptians portray images of mixed figures that contain elements of both nature and spirit, the Greek religion eliminates the natural element and presents the divine in the form of

⁷ Hegel, “Am 29. September 1809,” in *Vermischte Schriften*, vols 1–2, ed. by Friedrich Förster and Ludwig Boumann, vols 16–17 (1834–5) in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, vols 1–18, ed. by Ludwig Boumann, Friedrich Förster, Eduard Gans, Karl Hegel, Leopold von Henning, Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Philipp Marheineke, Karl Ludwig Michelet, Karl Rosenkranz, Johannes Schulze, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1832–45, vol. 16, pp. 133–47; *MW*, pp. 291–9.

⁸ See Hegel, *TE*, pp. 77f.; *TJ*, p. 47. *TE*, p. 85; *TJ*, pp. 54f. For the early Hegel's positive disposition towards the Greek religion, see J. Glenn Gray, *Hegel and Greek Thought*, New York: Harper 1968, p. 24.

⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 160–89; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 66–95. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 455–97; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 353–96. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 642–69; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 534–60. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 747–58; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 631–40. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 224–88; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 96–156. *RGI*, pp. 111–91.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 223–77; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 292–360. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 371–425; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 314–93. *GRW*, pp. 527–58.

¹¹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 427–516; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 3–119.

¹² Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 424–53; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 535–69.

¹³ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 149–487; *Jub.*, vol. 17, pp. 187–434. *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 2, pp. 1–453; *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 3–586 and vol. 19, pp. 3–96.

spirit alone.¹⁴ The Greek gods look like human beings. Thus with the Greeks the emancipation from nature takes another important step forward.

9.1. CLASSICAL STUDIES IN HEGEL'S TIME

The Germans had long had a love affair with ancient Greek culture and art.¹⁵ Figures such as Schiller, Goethe, Herder, and Schleiermacher were all fascinated by the Greeks and actively made use of them. In this context many famous works come to mind: Schiller's poem *The Gods of Greece*, his translation of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia*, Lessing's treatise *Laocoon*, Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *The Bride of Corinth*, Friedrich von Schlegel's *On the Study of Greek Poetry* and *The History of Poetry from the Greeks and Romans*, Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles, Schelling's treatise *The Deities of Samothrace*, Schleiermacher's Plato translations, and Wilhelm von Humboldt's translations of Pindar and Aeschylus and his Greek-inspired conception of education and *Bildung*.¹⁶

The study of ancient Greek and Latin was traditionally associated with education in theology. It was in Hegel's time a relatively recent phenomenon that classical studies established itself as a secular field with a focus on the pagan authors. While scholarship in the eighteenth century, particularly in France, was often associated with great Latin authors, such as Cicero, Livy, Virgil, and Ovid, there was a shift in the nineteenth century, particularly in the German-speaking world, to Greek ones. This is what is known as the movement of German neohellenism. The Latin tradition came to be regarded as a shallow, watered-down form of culture in contrast to the more authentic and original Greeks.

¹⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 424; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 534f.: "In this unity of self-conscious Spirit with itself, in so far as it is the shape and the object of its consciousness, its blendings with the unconscious shapes are purged of the immediate shapes of nature. These monsters in shape, word, and deed are dissolved into spiritual shape."

¹⁵ See Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996.

¹⁶ For studies on these figures and their relation to Greek culture, see Humphry Trevelyan, *Goethe and the Greeks*, London et al.: Cambridge University Press 1941. Ernst Grumach, *Goethe und die Antike. Eine Sammlung*, vols 1–2, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1949. Jean Quillien, *G. de Humboldt et la Grèce: modèle et histoire*, Lille: Presses Universitaires du Lille 1983. Walther Rehm, *Griechenthum und Goethezeit. Geschichte eines Glaubens*, 4th ed., Bern and Munich: Franke Verlag 1968 [1936]. E.M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Cambridge: At the University Press 1935.

In the eighteenth century the above-mentioned Johann Joachim Winckelmann traveled to Italy and visited the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum.¹⁷ When he publicized what he saw, he unleashed a wave of educated European tourists, who were all keen to see the antiquities for themselves. Hegel also mentions these ruins.¹⁸ With Winckelmann leading the way, the neoclassicism of the late eighteenth century was born. The key text was Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* from 1764, the importance of which was immediately recognized.¹⁹ This was the first work to attempt to trace the development of art in a historical fashion through different peoples and cultures. As has been seen above, Winckelmann gave accounts not just of Greek and Roman art but also of the artistic achievements of, among others, the Persians and Egyptians. This approach was sympathetic to Hegel, who was also interested in tracing the forms of spirit, including art, through their historical trajectory. Goethe played an important role in making the treasures of ancient Italy famous by eulogizing Winckelmann in his work *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* from 1805.²⁰ Winckelmann was also idolized by the next generation of German classical scholars such as Christian Gottlob Heyne, Johann August Ernesti (1707–81), and Johann Jakob Reiske (1716–74). In his *Lectures on Aesthetics* Hegel hails Winckelmann's efforts to revive ancient culture and to create a new field of art.²¹

One indirect result of Winckelmann's efforts and the rise of interest in Greek and Roman antiquity was the establishment of positions for Classical Studies at the German-speaking universities.²² A key figure in this story is Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824),²³ who is known for his disdain for

¹⁷ For Winckelmann, see Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1976, pp. 167–72. Carl Justi, *Winckelmann und seine Zeitgenossen*, vols 1–3, 2nd ed., Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel 1898. Wolfgang Leppmann, *Winckelmann*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1970. (In German as *Winckelmann. Eine Biographie*, Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen Verlag 1971.) John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vols 1–3, New York and London: Hafner Publishing Company 1967, vol. 3, pp. 21–4.

¹⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 217; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 288.

¹⁹ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vols 1–2, Dresden: In der Waltherischen Hof-Buchhandlung 1764. This work was supplemented by *Anmerkungen zur Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vols 1–2, Dresden: In der Waltherischen Hof-Buchhandlung 1767.

²⁰ Goethe, *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert*. In *Briefen und Aufsätzen*, Tübingen: J.G. Cotta 1805.

²¹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 63; *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 99.

²² See Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 3.

²³ See Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970*, pp. 16–24. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *History of Classical Scholarship*, trans. by Alan Harris, ed. by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, London: Duckworth 1982, pp. 108–9, p. 115. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1976, pp. 173–7. J.F.J. Arnoldt, *Fr. Aug. Wolf in seinem Verhältnisse zum Schulwesen und zur Paedagogik*, vol. 1, *Biographischer Theil*, Braunschweig: C.A. Schwetscke und Sohn 1861. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 3, pp. 51–61. Conrad Bursian, *Geschichte der classischen*

religion and his efforts to create an institutional structure at the university for the study of the classical languages independent of theology. He is said to be the founder of scholarly philology and credited with coining the term "*Altertumswissenschaft*" to designate the broad field of classical studies. Among his proudest achievements was the creation in Halle of the first academic department for classical studies in the Germanophone world, where he was professor from 1783–1807. His main interests were Plato and Homer. His *Prolegomena ad Homerum* from 1795 quickly came to be regarded as a groundbreaking work for its attempt to reconstruct the history of the Homeric text.²⁴ Hegel critically refers to this work in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.²⁵

Wolf's students August Boeckh (1785–1867)²⁶ and August Immanuel Bekker (1785–1871)²⁷ were appointed to the new university in Berlin, where they established the Department of Classics which became one of the points of pride of the university. Both of these figures were Hegel's colleagues, when he arrived in the Prussian capital in 1818. Appointed right from the founding of the university in 1810, Bekker was an astonishingly productive scholar, publishing influential editions of numerous classical authors based on authoritative manuscripts in Paris. Among his most famous is his now standard edition of the works of Aristotle.²⁸

Boeckh became professor at the university in Heidelberg from 1809. He shared with Hegel a personal friendship with Creuzer and an interest in the latter's work on mythology. In 1811 he was appointed to the University of Berlin, where he worked for the rest of his life. Having studied under Schleiermacher, Boeckh had a more philosophical turn of mind and was positively disposed towards idealist philosophy. His posthumously published

Philologie in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, vols 1–2, Munich and Leipzig: R. Oldenbourg 1883, vol. 1, pp. 517–664.

²⁴ Friedrich August Wolf, *Prolegomena ad Homerum sive De operum Homericorum prisca et genuina forma variisque mutationibus et probabili ratione emendandi*, vol. 1, Halis Saxonum: e Libraria Orphanotropei 1795. (Only one volume appeared.)

²⁵ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 1087; *Jub.*, vol. 14, p. 388.

²⁶ See Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship*, pp. 120–3. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850*, pp. 181–2. Max Hoffmann, *August Boeckh. Lebensbeschreibung und Auswahl aus seinem wissenschaftlichem Briefwechsel*, Leipzig: B. G. Teubner 1901. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 3, pp. 95–101. Max Lenz, *Geschichte der Königlich Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, vols 1–4, Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses 1910–18, vol. 1, pp. 266f. For Boeckh's relation to Hegel see *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 286, p. 294, p. 393. Bursian, *Geschichte der classischen Philologie in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 2, pp. 687–705.

²⁷ See Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship*, pp. 116–17. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 3, pp. 85–7. Bursian, *Geschichte der classischen Philologie in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 1, pp. 658–64.

²⁸ *Aristoteles Graece ex recognitione Immanuelis Bekkeri*, vols 1–5, Berlin: apud Georgium Reimerum 1831–70.

Encyclopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften reflects a general influence from Hegel, although the work does not hesitate to criticize him.²⁹ Boeckh wanted to conceive of classical scholarship not merely as the editing of texts and the creation of new editions but rather as the understanding of the ancient world in its entirety. This included history, art, philosophy, and religion—a systematic approach that recalls that of Hegel.

Another important figure was Karl Otfried Müller, who was one of the critics of Creuzer.³⁰ In 1819 Müller received a professorship in classics at Göttingen. He played an important role in the controversies concerning the proper interpretation of Greek mythology with his *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* from 1825.³¹ Müller claimed that the key to understanding myths was to see them in their proper historical context; they were the natural result of a specific people at a specific historical time coming to terms with its environment and unique set of problems. He was influential for the Romantic reception of Hellenism with the view that Greek culture and religion were the expression of a specific and characteristic spirit or *Volksgeist*. Specific deities, myths, and religious traditions could be traced to specific Greek tribes at the early stages of development in Greek culture. Müller's understanding of Greek mythology presented an important alternative to the controversial one advocated by Creuzer.

One somewhat odd feature of the academic landscape in the German-speaking world at the time was the fact that some of the main figures who were encountered previously as the pioneers of Indology were in fact also leading figures in classical studies. Herder, Bopp, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich and August Wilhelm von Schlegel were all graecophiles before they discovered the literature of India. This was significant since it shows that their understanding of Indian culture was formed against the background of and in constant comparison with the Greek and Roman culture that these men had been nourished with since their youth.

²⁹ August Boeckh, *Encyclopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, ed. by Ernst Bratuscheck, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner 1877. For Boeckh's relation to Hegel see Lenz, *Geschichte der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, vol. 2, p. 286, p. 294, p. 393.

³⁰ See Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship*, pp. 127–30. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 3, pp. 213–16. Bursian, *Geschichte der klassischen Philologie in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 2, pp. 1007–28.

³¹ Karl Otfried Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1825. See also his *Geschichten hellenischer Stämme und Städte*, vols 1–2, Breslau: Josef Max 1820–4.

9.2. HEGEL'S SOURCES

Hegel knew personally many of the leading figures in classical studies of his day and owned numerous editions of the classical authors edited by these scholars. He used many sources, both ancient and modern, for his account of the Greek religion.³² His ancient sources cover the spectrum of extant Greek literature. He frequently draws on episodes from Homer, especially the *Iliad*. But he also refers to the lyric poets Pindar and Anacreon. A key source of information about Greek religion among the poets is, naturally enough, Hesiod's *Theogony*. He further avails himself of the Greek tragic writers, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus, while also making use of the comic writer Aristophanes. Hegel examines these dramatists extensively in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. He also refers to the Greek geographer Pausanias from the 2nd century AD and the Christian writer Clement of Alexandria. Finally, he alludes to both Plato and Aristotle in his analysis.

Hegel seems to be familiar with Herder's account of ancient Greece in the latter's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.³³ Like Hegel, Herder characterizes the Greeks as humanity's childhood in its development to maturity, thus occupying the place between the infancy of the Orient and the adulthood of modern Europe.³⁴ In Herder's account of the different forms of Greek art and their relation to the Greek religion one can find clear parallels to Hegel's analysis,³⁵ especially in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Both ascribe a central importance to art as what is special and characteristic about Greek culture. As in Hegel's account, Herder includes under Greek art not just things such as sculptures or architecture but also the Greek games and political institutions. Herder also seems to anticipate Hegel's famous claim that the "history of the world travels from east to west,"³⁶ when he writes, "the whole current of civilization . . . flowed westwards, because eastwards it was unable to flow or to spread."³⁷ While Herder was an important figure in the introduction of Asian cultures to the German-speaking reader, there can be no

³² For Hegel's sources see the "Editorial Introduction" in *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 9–11, pp. 17–19, pp. 51–5, pp. 83–6.

³³ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vols 1–4, Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1784–91, vol. 3, pp. 135–220. (English translation: *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vols 1–2, trans. by T. Churchill, 2nd ed., London: J. Johnson 1803, vol. 2, pp. 116–94.)

³⁴ See, for example, Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 17f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 45f. Herder uses this characterization of the Greeks throughout his analysis.

³⁵ See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, pp. 155–67. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, pp. 136–46.)

³⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 103; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 150.

³⁷ See Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 3, p. 137. (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, vol. 2, p. 119.)

doubt about the fact that he was a zealous grecophile, who placed Greek culture head and shoulders above that of the Orient.

Hegel was well read in the current discussions about ancient Greek religion that were going on in Prussia and the German states. One important work in this context is again Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*.³⁸ Although this work is a comparative study of world mythologies, covering a vast amount of material from different cultures, its main focus is, as the title indicates, on the Greeks. Creuzer covers the key figures of the Greek religion, for example, Artemis, Hercules, Apollo, and Poseidon, often tracing their origins to other earlier religions. Creuzer had attempted to establish connections between Hindu and Greek mythology, but he also attempted to show analogies between the Greek religion and Christianity. This presumably had an influence on Hegel who places the Greek religion very high in his economy of religions and, indeed, close to Christianity.

There were discussions going on at the time concerning the Greek mystery cults. One important work in this context was Christian August Lobeck's *Aglaophamus: sive, De theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis*.³⁹ This book, which Hegel owned, attempted to organize carefully and systematically the extant evidence about the Greek religion. Specifically, it provided an interpretation of the origin of the Greek mystery cults, primarily the Eleusinian Mysteries and the tradition associated with Orpheus, who was thought to be the founder of the Mysteries of Dionysus. Lobeck criticizes Creuzer's view that these cults originated in Eastern religions. Further, he argues, again in criticism of Creuzer, that the mystery cults do not mark something distinct from the Greeks' other religious practices, but rather were part and parcel of mainstream Greek religion.

Hegel also owned the posthumous two-volume *Recherches historiques et critiques sur les mystères du paganisme* by the historian Guilhem de Clermont-Lodève, Baron de Sainte-Croix (1746–1809).⁴⁰ This work focuses on the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Roman cult of Ceres and Proserpina.

³⁸ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1810–12. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, 2nd fully revised edition, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819–21. See *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, p. 285; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 153. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 493; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 392.

³⁹ Christian Lobeck, *Aglaophamus sive De theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis libri tres*, vols 1–2, Königsberg: Borntraeger 1829 (*Hegel's Library*, 695–6). See Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship*, pp. 111–12.

⁴⁰ Guilhem de Clermont-Lodève, Baron de Sainte-Croix, *Recherches historiques et critiques sur les mystères du paganisme*, vols 1–2, 2nd ed., Paris: Chez Bure Frères 1817 (*Hegel's Library*, 657–8).

Hegel is critical of this research since he regards the mysteries as belonging to an early stage in the development of Greek religion, which was still under the sway of the principle of nature.⁴¹ He supports Creuzer's view that the origins of the Greek mystery cults are to be found in the religions of the East.⁴²

Also among his modern sources one can mention Gottfried Hermann's two-volume *Die Feste von Hellas historisch-philosophisch bearbeitet und zum erstenmal nach ihrem Sinn und Zweck erläutert* from 1803.⁴³ This work, which Hegel owned, examines the various religious festivals of the ancient Greeks, with the claim that this is a good way to understand both the people and their culture. For his analysis of the oracles Hegel relies on the work of the French classicist Etienne Clavier (1762–1817), *Mémoire sur les oracles des anciens*.⁴⁴ In his lectures he also refers to the multi-volume work of Charles François Dupuis (1742–1809), *Origine de tous les cultes; ou, Religion universelle*.⁴⁵

Hegel further makes use of Karl Otfried Müller's two-volume *Die Dorier* from 1824.⁴⁶ As the title indicates, the work is dedicated to exploring the history and culture of the ancient Greek ethnic group the Dorians. The second part of this book is entitled "Religion und Mythos des Dorischen Stammes." Here Müller goes into some detail about the cult of Apollo, and Hegel takes this up in a critical fashion in his lectures. There are also individual chapters on Artemis and Heracles as well as long discussions of Zeus, Hera, Athena, Demeter, Poseidon, Dionysius, Aphrodite, and others.

⁴¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 247; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 323f.: "These mysteries of the Greeks present something which, as unknown, has attracted the curiosity of all times, under the supposition of profound wisdom. It must first be remarked that their antique and primary character, in virtue of its very antiquity, shows their destitution of excellence—their inferiority—that the more refined truths are not expressed in these mysteries, and that the view which many have entertained is incorrect, viz.—that the unity of God, in opposition to polytheism, was taught in them."

⁴² See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 492; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 392.

⁴³ Martin Gottfried Hermann, *Die Feste von Hellas historisch-philosophisch bearbeitet und zum erstenmal nach ihrem Sinn und Zweck erläutert*, vols 1–2, Berlin: Heinrich Frölich 1803 (*Hegel's Library*, 673–4).

⁴⁴ Etienne Clavier, *Mémoire sur les oracles des anciens*, Paris: Libraire Duponcet and Libraire Delaunay 1818 (*Hegel's Library*, 656).

⁴⁵ Charles François Dupuis, *Origine de tous les cultes; ou, Religion universelle*, vols 1–7, Paris: Chez H. Agasse 1794. See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 471; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 371: "Dupuis made the Greek gods into calendrical deities, definite divisions of the calendar." See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 654n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 546n.

⁴⁶ Karl Otfried Müller, *Die Dorier*, vols 1–2, Breslau: Josef Max und Komp. 1824. See *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 321. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 263n; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 343n. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 648; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 540.

9.3. THE INTERPRETATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF NATURE

Hegel explains that the characteristic of the Greek Spirit is to have a curiosity about or to wonder at nature.⁴⁷ Unlike other peoples who merely gaped at nature or accepted it as a given without examining it further, the Greeks were stimulated by the belief that nature had something important to say.⁴⁸ In sensing something familiar in nature, the Greeks were motivated to explore it. They believed that it had something intelligible to convey if only it could be understood correctly. The message of nature had to be converted into a form comprehensible to human thought: "The interpretation and explanation of Nature and its transformations—the indication of their sense and import—is the act of the subjective spirit; and to this the Greeks attached the same *μαντεία*. The general idea which this embodies is the form in which man realizes his relationship to Nature."⁴⁹ The Greek word *μαντεία* means "oracle" or "prophecy" but more specifically the prophetic power or mode of divination. There are numerous examples of the Greeks interpreting natural phenomenon in order to make sense of them in the context of the human world.

One of these is the god Pan: "To the Greeks Pan did not represent the objective whole, but that indefinite neutral ground which involves the element of the subjective; he embodies that thrill which pervades us in the silence of the forests."⁵⁰ Hegel underscores the subjective element here. Pan is what gives us a feeling of fear or anxiety when we walk alone in the woods at night. Nature is not simply indifferent but has a meaning that we can infer even in its silence. Nature has something to say, but this is only rendered meaningful by human beings. Pan's meaning arises in the human mind.

As another example of the meaning of nature Hegel discusses the shift from the ancient goddesses of the water, the Naiads, to the Muses. He explains:

On the same principle the Greeks listened to the murmuring fountains, and asked what might be thereby signified; but the signification which they were led to attach to it was not the objective meaning of the fountain, but the subjective—that of the subject itself, which further exalts the Naiad to a Muse. The Naiads, or fountains, are the external, objective origin of the Muses. Yet the immortal songs of the Muses are not that which is heard in the murmuring of the fountains; they are the productions of the thoughtfully listening Spirit—creative while observant. The interpretation and explanation of nature and its transformations—the indication of their sense and import—is the act of the subjective Spirit.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 234; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 308f.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 234; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 309.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 235; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 310.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 235; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 309.

⁵¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 235; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 310. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 649; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 541.

The Naiads are merely natural deities representing the water of fountains, lakes, marshes, etc. But in time the sound of water is transformed by the ears of the Greeks into poetry, where it is represented by the Muses. There thus arises a contrast of the divinities of nature and those of spirit. One can see the difference between the Naiads and the Muses in the pictorial images the Greeks have left behind. In these images the Muses are portrayed as cultivated women; they wear elegant clothes, the mark of civilization, in contrast to the Naiads who remain naked in their natural state. Each of the Muses stands for a specific area of human culture: Clio (history), Thalia (comedy), Erato (love poetry), Euterpe (elegiac poetry), Polyhymnia (hymns), Calliope (epic poetry), Terpsichore (dance), Urania (astronomy), and Melpomene (tragedy). They are all represented with some symbol representing their respective field, for example, Thalia with a comic mask, Urania with a globe, etc. Each of them has a name, a concrete character and profile. By contrast, the Naiads are not individuated in this way. They are all in principle the same, lacking any subjectivity or specific personality. They have no trappings of civilized life, but merely disport in a carefree manner in the waters and streams.

Hegel gives another example from Book 24 of Homer's *Odyssey*, where the soul of the deceased King Agamemnon addresses his former comrade Achilles and explains what transpired after the latter's death:

But when we had carried you to the ships, away from the fighting.
 We laid you out on a litter, and anointed your handsome body
 with warm water and with unguents, and by you the Danaans
 shed many hot tears, and cut their hair short for you; and also
 your mother, hearing the news, came out of the sea, with immortal
 sea girls beside her. Immortal crying arose and spread over
 the great sea, and trembling seized hold of all the Achaians.
 and now they would have started away, and gone on the hollow
 ships, had not a man of much ancient wisdom halted them,
 Nestor, whose advice had also shown best before this.
 He in kind intention toward all spoke forth and addressed them:
 "Hold fast, Argives; do not run away, O young Achaians.
 It is his mother coming out of the sea with immortal
 sea girls beside her, to be with her son, who has perished."⁵²

Achilles' mother is the sea goddess Thetis, one of the Nereids. Thus when the sea became agitated, it was natural to ascribe this to her since she had just heard of the death of her son. Hegel understands this passage as an example of the interpretation of a natural phenomenon—the stormy and violent waves—in terms of human affairs. He explains, "Homer tells us, in the last book of the *Odyssey*, that while the Greeks were overwhelmed with sorrow for Achilles, a

⁵² *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore, New York et al.: Harper & Row 1965, Book 24, lines 43–56, p. 346.

violent agitation came over the sea: the Greeks were on the point of dispersing in terror, when the experienced Nestor arose and interpreted the phenomenon to them. Thetis, he said, was coming, with her nymphs, to lament for the death of her son."⁵³

Hegel interprets a similar situation from the beginning of the *Iliad*.⁵⁴ The Greek warriors are beset with a terrible plague: "When a pestilence broke out in the camp of the Greeks, the Priest Calchas explained that Apollo was incensed at their not having restored the daughter of his priest Chryses when a ransom had been offered."⁵⁵ Here again a natural phenomenon, the plague, is given a meaning that is relevant for the human sphere of spirit. The Greeks have offended Apollo, who represents the sun and the heat associated with the plague. In his anger Apollo is thus thought to punish them.

The point of these examples is, for Hegel, to show that the Greeks have advanced beyond the religions of nature in a significant sense. While the latter looked at nature and saw immediately the divine, the Greeks did not accept the truth of nature as such. Instead, they were stimulated by nature, but they only accepted it when it was transformed or translated into an object of spirit. The Greeks only allow spirit and not mere nature to have an influence over them. The idea is that there is a hidden subject in nature that is trying to speak to human beings.⁵⁶ The Greeks mark a clear step beyond the natural religions, but they are still not yet entirely free from nature:

This phase of Spirit is the medium between the loss of individuality on the part of man (such as we observe in the Asiatic principle, in which the Spiritual and Divine exists only under a natural form), and infinite subjectivity as pure certainty of itself—the position that the ego is the ground of all that can lay claim to substantial existence. The Greek Spirit as the medium between these two, begins with nature, but transforms it into a mere objective form of its (Spirit's) own existence. Spirituality is therefore not yet absolutely free; not yet absolutely self-produced—is not self-stimulation.⁵⁷

The Greeks can transform nature, but they still need it as their point of departure. Much of the Greek religion is intimately connected with the arts. Through sculpture, painting, music, and architecture, the Greeks engage in a religious activity and honor their gods. They take an object of nature, marble, stone, etc., and transform it into one of Spirit.

⁵³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 235f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 310. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 658n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 550n.

⁵⁴ See *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1951, Book I, lines 7ff., pp. 59ff.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 236; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 310f. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 658n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 550n. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 63.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 236f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 312.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 238; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 313f.

9.4. THE WAR OF THE GODS

The Greek religion developed over several centuries. The different Greek cities and populations each had their own local deities and myths. The immediate impression that often results from this is that the Greek gods and mythology constitute one great collective confusion which is impossible to make sense of. However, there is, to Hegel's mind, a *logos* to this confusion if one looks at the matter with a philosophical disposition. When the Greeks came into contact with one another, these myths changed in order to accommodate the different gods and goddesses and their complex relations to one another.⁵⁸ According to Hegel's view of this development, as the Greeks developed culturally, their original gods, which were closely associated with nature, no longer seemed worthy or adequate. In a sense the Greeks outgrew these older gods and began to replace them with new ones, which better reflected their own historical and cultural situation. But the result of this change appeared to be even more confusion since there were then different gods who shared the same area of responsibility, such as, for example, Oceanus and Poseidon. Some account needed to be given for why the new gods replaced the earlier ones. This transformation of nature into spirit is reflected in Greek mythology. The mythological explanation for this transition is that there was a war between the different generations of the gods, and the younger generation defeated and displaced the older one. However, for Hegel, the truth is that the older generation was no longer viable since these gods no longer reflected the Greek self-conception, which, in the course of time, had surpassed it.

Hegel begins by recounting the story of the gods as related in Hesiod's *Theogony*.⁵⁹ According to Hesiod, at the beginning there were none of the familiar Olympian gods, but instead there was Chaos, from which sprung different natural deities, Gaia (the Earth), Tartarus (the Underworld), Eros (love), Nyx (night), and Erebus (darkness). Hegel understands this initial stage as a movement from indeterminacy (chaos) to differentiation and determination (somewhat akin to the account of the creation in Genesis where the

⁵⁸ See Hegel, "On the Religion of the Greeks and Romans," *MW*, p. 10; *Dokumente*, p. 44: "When several tribes united in a common cause or were otherwise mingled, each one retained its god. However, in order to solidify the union, they had their special deities enter into a society, and they put them all together in a place where the entire people worshipped all of them in common. —Greece and Rome had their pantheon, and every city had furthermore its own tutelary god. The fact that these nations were a mixture of so many different peoples is the main explanation for their numerous deities and for the diverse legends and stories involving the same."

⁵⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 463n-464n; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 362n-363n. Hesiod's account of the origin of the different gods begins at verse 116. See *Theogony in Hesiod*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 1959, pp. 130ff. See Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (2nd fully revised edition, 1819-21), vol. 2, pp. 418-42.

different elements of nature are divided, separated, and distinguished from one another). He explains:

Hence chaos is itself something posited. But what posits it we are not told: all we are told is that it was or became. For the foundation is not the self but the selfless, necessity, of which it can only be said that it is. Chaos is the unity that sets the immediate in motion, but itself is not yet subject or particularity. So it is not said of it that it creates; on the contrary, as it itself only “becomes,” so too this necessity only “becomes” out of it—the “far-flung earth,” “the shades of Tartarus,” Erebus and Night, and Eros “adorned with beauty before all the immortals.” We see arising the totality of particularity: the earth, the positive element, the universal foundation; Tartarus, Erebus the night, the negative element; and Eros, the uniting, active element.⁶⁰

For Hegel, a key element of the Greek gods is their individual personalities, and for this reason the process of particularization or individualization is of crucial importance. Hegel understands this process of determination in terms of his own dialectic of opposites: first there is something positive (Gaia), and this then produces its own negation (Tartarus, Erebus), and then the positive and the negative are sublated and united in a third element (Eros).

The next generation of gods is that of the so-called Titans, who are the children of Gaia and Uranos; in other words, the union of the earth (Gaia) and the sky (Uranos) results in everything that lies between these two spheres. The Titans consist of the following gods: Cronos, Oceanus, Tethys, Koios (or Coeus), Phoebe, Hyperion, Theia, Kreios (or Crius), Iapetos, Themis, Mnemosyne, and Rhea.⁶¹ This generation of gods was ruled tyrannically by Uranos. With the help of Gaia, Cronos leads a rebellion against his father.⁶² The result of this revolt is the overthrow of Uranos and the installment of Cronos as the new king of the gods. He then rules the Titans until he is himself overthrown by his son Zeus and the generation of the Olympians.

Hegel emphasizes that while the Titans might seem to have some characteristics that we would associate with humans, they are not conceived as genuine subjective personalities but are simply the natural forces:

In the cosmogonies, which are at the same time theogonies, we encounter these nature deities—universal powers of nature, formations and configurations of nature, which we number together among the Titans. They, too, are personified; but in their case the personification is superficial; it is only personification, for the content of Helios, for example, is something natural and not something spiritual,

⁶⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 463n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 362n.

⁶¹ See Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (2nd fully revised edition, 1819–21), vol. 2, pp. 427ff.

⁶² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 463n–464n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 363n.

it is no spiritual power. That Helios is represented in a human fashion or is active in human fashion is an empty form of personification. Helios is not the god of the sun—the Greeks never express themselves this way. . . . These are the powers of nature.⁶³

In Greek the word for the natural forces, for example, Helios, is the same word used for the god or goddess who is responsible for them. The Greeks thus did not make any conceptual difference between the forces and the deities. Thus, these early divinities were indistinguishable from the natural forces. They were devoid of human personalities. As Greek culture developed, these gods as natural forces seemed more and more hollow, and the Greeks needed divinities who better reflected their new, more developed social and political life. Thus they invented the Olympians.

The Olympians represent the gods not of nature but of spirit. The shift from the Titans to the Olympians is portrayed mythologically as the war of the gods.⁶⁴ Hegel recalls the myth of how the Titans, led by Cronos, were overthrown by Zeus and the Olympian gods.⁶⁵ Zeus overthrows his father Cronos and establishes a new reign. This war of the gods represents symbolically a movement from nature to spirit.⁶⁶ The old gods of nature are supplanted by the new Olympian gods who are far more human.

When the Olympians were victorious, they did not utterly destroy the Titans but drove them out into a marginalized existence.⁶⁷ Hegel indicates that the new Olympian gods better reflect civilized life and the things that constitute it.⁶⁸ According to Hegel, this war represents the lone action in the entire history of the gods with which they themselves are solely concerned. The war of the gods is thus the signal event in defining and determining the Greek conception of the divinities.

One possible source for Hegel's account of the war of the gods was Karl Philipp Moritz's (1756–93) *Götterlehre oder mythologische Dichtungen der Alten*.⁶⁹ It is quite probable that Hegel knew this work since he used

⁶³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 644f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 536f. Cf. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 321.

⁶⁴ See Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (2nd fully revised edition, 1819–21), vol. 2, pp. 439ff.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 464f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 365. Cf. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 458–75; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 44–65.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 244f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 320. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 464ff.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 364ff. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 645–6; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 537–8.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 320: "It is true they continue to be venerated, but not as governing powers; for they are relegated to the verge [the limbus] of the world." See also *PhS*, p. 428; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 539f.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 321.

⁶⁹ Karl Philipp Moritz, *Götterlehre oder mythologische Dichtungen der Alten*, Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger 1791. This work also appeared in several expanded editions, e.g., 6th ed., Berlin: Friedrich August Herbig 1825.

extensively Moritz's *ANΘΟΥΣΙΑ oder Roms Alterthümer* for his account of the Roman gods.⁷⁰ The war of the gods plays an important role in Moritz's interpretation in the *Götterlehre*, which contains a chapter dedicated to it.⁷¹ Like Hegel, he claims that the original gods represented the forces of nature, while the later gods were more civilized. Also like Hegel, Moritz is attentive to the replacement of the older gods Helios and Oceanus with their Olympian counterparts, Apollo and Poseidon.⁷²

9.5. THE SHIFT FROM THE GODS OF NATURE TO THE GODS OF SPIRIT

Hegel then gives several examples of how this shift in focus from nature to spirit is seen in the conception of individual gods. He points out that the Olympians still maintain some natural powers like the Titans, but significantly new powers are added to reflect the development of spirit.⁷³ Zeus is like Uranos in that he still is responsible for weather phenomena, causing rain and lightning. But he surpasses Uranos and assumes responsibilities associated with human culture: he is the god of the state and civic life. Hegel contrasts the natural deities, the Eumenides and the Erinyes, with Zeus. The former represent only the law of individual conscience, whereas Zeus represents the state.⁷⁴

The Titans represent merely personified natural forces and as such are not developed individual personalities. This is the case with the god Oceanus, who is merely a symbol for the force of the sea. By contrast, the analogous god among the Olympians, that is, Poseidon, has other characteristics that transcend the merely natural power.⁷⁵ In addition to being the wild force of the sea like his predecessor, Poseidon is also ascribed qualities associated with human life and culture, for example, building or construction, and the breeding of horses. The comparison of these two generations of gods represents

⁷⁰ Karl Philipp Moritz, *ANΘΟΥΣΙΑ oder Roms Alterthümer. Ein Buch für die Menschheit. Die heiligen Gebräuche der Römer*, Berlin: Friedrich Maurer 1791. (See LPR, vol. 2, p. 188; VPR, Part 2, p. 94. See Hegel's Library, 708.)

⁷¹ Moritz, "Der Götterkrieg," in *Götterlehre oder mythologische Dichtungen der Alten* (1791), pp. 20–30; (1825), pp. 13–21.

⁷² Moritz, "Der Götterkrieg," in *Götterlehre oder mythologische Dichtungen der Alten* (1791), p. 24; (1825), p. 17: "An der Stelle des Titanen Helios, oder des Sonnengottes, steht der ewig junge Apoll mit Pfeil und Bogen. Unbestimmt und schwankend schimmert das Bild vom Helios durch, und die Phantasie verwechselt in den Werken der Dichtkunst ofte beide mit einander. So steht an der Stelle des alten Oceanus, Neptun mit seinem Dreizack, und beherrscht die Fluthen des Meers."

⁷³ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 321. LPR, vol. 2, p. 647; VPR, Part 2, p. 539. See also LPR, vol. 2, p. 466; VPR, Part 2, p. 366.

⁷⁴ Hegel, LPR, vol. 2, p. 646; VPR, Part 2, p. 538.

⁷⁵ Hegel, LPR, vol. 2, p. 466; VPR, Part 2, p. 366.

symbolically, for Hegel, the movement from natural religion to spirit. Hegel explains, "Oceanus as such, is only the element of nature which his name denotes. Poseidon has still the wildness of that element in his character; but he is also an ethical personage; to him is ascribed the building of walls and the production of the horse."⁷⁶ One can see the point that Hegel is making most clearly in the ancient images of these divinities (see Fig. 9.1).

In some ancient images Poseidon is depicted as a strong warrior riding through the waves on his horse-drawn chariot, a symbol of human culture and development. By contrast, Oceanus looks more like something that would come from the sea: his lower body is that of a fish and on his head he has claws like those of a crab or lobster. He holds in his hands a fish and an eel. Here it is clear that Oceanus belongs more to nature than to spirit.

Another example that Hegel gives is that of the older god Helios or the sun and the Olympian Apollo. Hegel explains, "Helios is the sun as a natural element. This light, according to the analogy of Spirit, has been transformed to self-consciousness, and Apollo has proceeded from Helios."⁷⁷ Hegel also seizes the opportunity to compare the Greek religion with that of the Orient, specifically Zoroastrianism, on this importance of light: the Lycian Apollo "has an immediate connection with light. That comes from Asia Minor; the natural aspect, the light, is more prominent to the East."⁷⁸ Here again he implicitly shows his agreement with Creuzer.⁷⁹ Hegel points out that while Apollo is still



Fig. 9.1. Detail from a depiction of Oceanus in the *Wedding of Peleus and Thetis* in the British Museum. ART Collection / Alamy Stock Photo.

⁷⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 321. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 466; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 366.

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 245; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 321. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 647–8; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 539–40.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 648; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 540.

⁷⁹ See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 648n; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 789–90, commentary to 540, 791–5.

associated with light, this is not his main characteristic, and for this reason light has been reduced to a symbol, a halo around his head.⁸⁰ Hegel also treats this connection in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. On this point he refers to the debate surrounding Creuzer: "Of course there is a dispute, e.g., between Voss and Creuzer, whether Apollo is to betoken the sun or not, but in fact we may say that he is and is not the sun, because he does not remain restricted to this natural content but is elevated to meaning the spiritual."⁸¹ In other words, for Hegel, Apollo, while an Olympian, still retains some vestiges of the earlier gods of nature. To this degree he represents the sun. But he has also advanced beyond this and represents knowledge; thus in the more advanced form the natural element of light is regarded merely as a symbol for human knowing instead of being a natural element.

Hegel also discusses the earlier Greek goddess Nemesis and the later deity Dike. The task of the ancient goddess Nemesis is to level what has grown out of its proper measure. Thus, Herodotus often portrays kings and leaders who enjoy great success but then are made to fall by Nemesis. Her working is merely mechanical, and she is portrayed as measuring the length of something to see if it is the proper size. By contrast, the later goddess Dike does more than simply level things that have grown out of proportion. She is an ethical goddess who persecutes moral wrong-doing. This is, for Hegel, the more developed concept of justice.⁸² The ancient goddess was a "principle," whereas later this goddess came to take on more human characteristics.

9.6. THE REDUCED ROLE OF ANIMALS

Another example of how the Greeks have advanced beyond the realm of pure nature is their use of animals as symbols. In previous religions such as Hinduism or the Egyptian religion, animals were regarded as sacred. The divine manifested itself in them. Now for the Greeks, animals lose this sacred status. They are relegated to a secondary or subordinate status. Hegel contrasts the depiction of the Greek Artemis, the goddess of the hunt and the protectress

⁸⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 648n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 540n. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 62.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 13, p. 62. See Johann Heinrich Voss, *Antisymbolik*, Stuttgart: Metzler 1824, p. 17, p. 54, p. 149, p. 323. Johann Heinrich Voss, *Antisymbolik*, vol. 2, Stuttgart: Metzler 1826, p. 9, pp. 38f. See Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, 2nd fully revised edition, vol. 2, pp. 139f.

⁸² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 647; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 539. See Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 223–226: "And she, destructive Night, bore Nemesis, / who gives much pain / to mortals; and afterward cheating Deception / and loving Affection / and then malignant Old Age / and the overbearing Discord." (English translated quoted from *Hesiod*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 1959, p. 136.)

of young girls, with the Asian equivalent. The worship of Artemis originated in Ephesus in Asia Minor, where her temple was celebrated throughout the ancient world. This cult was later brought to Greece, where the idea of this deity was reconceived. Hegel describes their relation as follows:

The Diana of Ephesus is still Asiatic and is represented with many breasts and bedecked with images of animals. Her foundation is natural life in general, the procreative and sustaining force of nature. The Diana of the Greeks, on the other hand, is the huntress who slays animals; she has not the sense and meaning of hunting generally, but of the hunt directed at wild animals. And these animals are indeed subdued and killed through the bravery of spiritual subjectivity, whereas in the earlier spheres of the religious spirit they were regarded as absolutely inviolate.⁸³

The sculpture of Artemis (see Fig. 9.2) clearly reveals Eastern influences. For Hegel, it makes sense that the “Asian” Artemis would be portrayed in a

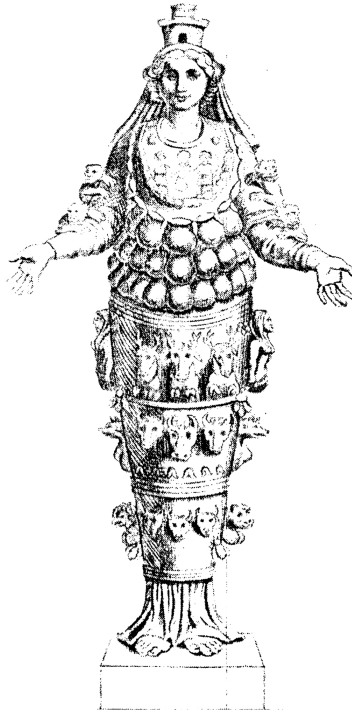


Fig. 9.2. Artemis (= Diana) of Ephesus from *Abbildungen zu Friedrich Creuzers Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker. Auf sechzig Tafeln*, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819, Tabula III, figure 4.

⁸³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 649n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 541n. *VPR*, Part 2, p. 361. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 234; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 308. *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 474; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 63f.

way that she is associated with nature, that is, with animal skins. She is continuous with nature. Her multiple breasts make her look like some kind of inhuman monster, but the symbolism is clear: she is the mother of the natural world. Below her many breasts are heads of various animals, which she presumably nourishes. By contrast, the Greek Artemis looks wholly human. In Greek sculpture she is often portrayed as just having captured a deer and is preparing to kill it. Instead of being continuous with nature and nourishing the creatures of nature, the Greek goddess is superior to it; she is the master of the captured animal. Creuzer, who was presumably one of Hegel's sources here, gives a fairly extensive account of Artemis and even includes a number of images of her taken from ancient coins and other depictions.⁸⁴

The shift in the role of animals can also clearly be seen in the practice of animal sacrifice. In eastern religions, where animals are held to be sacred, this is forbidden. Animals should not be killed. A vestige of this can still be found in Homer, where mention is made of the sacred cattle of the sun, which are not to be harmed. Prometheus is said to have taught human beings for the first time how to make an animal sacrifice. Hegel explains:

Prometheus gave fire to humanity and taught people to sacrifice. This means that the animals had belonged not to humanity but to a spiritual power, i.e., human beings had [previously] eaten no meat. Then Prometheus took the entire offering to Zeus; he had made two constructs, one wholly of bones and entrails with the skin drawn over it, and the other entirely of meat; but Zeus seized the first one.⁸⁵

The worshippers acknowledge the gift and power of the divine, who created the sacrificed animal, but they also profit from this by eating the flesh as a part of the ceremony. The message is that eating meat is permitted, provided that one gives thanks for it to the deity who created it.

The conception of the Greek divinities also reveals a new, lesser status for the animal world. With the Greeks the animal elements in the divine are still present but in a subordinate form: "The human form strips off the animal shape with which it was blended; the animal is for the god merely an accidental guise; it steps alongside its true shape and no longer has any worth on its own account, but is reduced to signifying something else and has sunk to the level of a mere symbol."⁸⁶ One need only compare the different images of the divine in the different religions that Hegel has traced to see his point. For the Hindus, animals were sacred. For the Egyptians the god Horus has the head of a falcon,

⁸⁴ Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (2nd fully revised edition, 1819–21), vol. 2, pp. 176–92, especially p. 178. See also *Abbildungen zu Friedrich Creuzers Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker*, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819, Tabula III, figure 4.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 650; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 541. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 466–7; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 366–7.

⁸⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 428; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 539.

but was a mixed figure since he had the body of a man. Now with the Greeks Zeus is a wholly anthropomorphic god. But what happens to the animal element? Does it disappear? No, Zeus is depicted together with an eagle. The eagle is his symbol. Here the bird has gone from deity to symbol in the course of the development at the same time as the human form has emerged as the form of the divine. With the Greeks, the religions of nature are surpassed: "Nature [is] transfigured by thought and united with self-conscious life. The form of the gods has, therefore, its nature-element within it as a transcended moment, as a dim memory."⁸⁷ The other Greek gods and goddesses also have their favorite animals as their symbols: Poseidon, the horse; Athena, the owl, Aphrodite, the dove, etc.

9.7. FATE, DESTINY, AND NECESSITY

For Hegel, a part of the religious experience is the desire to believe that there is some kind of providence and that one's actions have some kind of higher meaning in God's grand scheme of things. According to the Greek view, the notion of fate (*Μοῖρα* or *Αἷσα*) is ultimately the highest instance which stands above both humans and gods. It subjects everything to its power. All other forms of unity of the gods are superficial. There is no single all-powerful divinity that constitutes the connecting link to all the others. Only the power of fate or necessity is universal and encompasses even the divinities. Unlike the God of the Jews, Zeus is not all-powerful. Indeed, he rules only the heavens, while Poseidon rules the sea and Pluto the underworld. Thus any resolution that the Greek gods can give will always be a kind of political solution that will fall short of divine wisdom or providence.

While Yahweh stood outside of nature and was entirely transcendent, the Greek gods are still a part of nature. But fate or necessity is a higher power that stands above all the Greek gods and even above Zeus himself.⁸⁸ There is an opposition that opens up between the impersonal, abstract fate and the concrete personal gods of the Greeks. Hegel describes the nature of fate and necessity as follows:

⁸⁷ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 428; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 539. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 248; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 325: "Thus also the brutes which continued to rank as gods among the Egyptians, were degraded to external signs, accompanying the Spiritual god."

⁸⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 651; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 543. See also *PhS*, p. 443; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 557: "the universal self . . . hovers over them and over this whole world of picture-thinking to which the entire content belongs, as the irrational void of necessity." *Phil. of Mind*, § 384, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 38: "But the medium of sense can only exhibit the totality of spirit as an asunderness, as a circle of independent, mental or spiritual shapes; the unity embracing all these shapes remains, therefore, a wholly indeterminate, alien power over against the gods."

It is without content, is empty necessity, an empty unintelligible power that is devoid of the concept. It is not wise, for wisdom falls within the circle of the gods and includes concrete characteristics that belong in the sphere of the particular, and pertain to single gods. Destiny is devoid of purpose and wisdom, it is a blind necessity that stands above all, even above the gods, uncomprehended and desolate. The abstract cannot be comprehended. Comprehending means knowing something in its truth. What is debased and abstract is incomprehensible; what is rational is comprehensible because it is inwardly concrete.⁸⁹

The power of necessity or fate is unintelligible in the sense that it cannot be explained or given any clear or definite meaning; no clear pattern can be discerned in it. Things are simply thus. When people die suddenly in trivial accidents, for example, the human mind does not want to accept that something so precious as a human life can be destroyed in this way; it seeks some kind of deeper truth or meaning in the event, but none is forthcoming. It simply happened. This is the sentiment that the Greek concept of fate captures. Necessity is something foreign and therefore frightening to the human mind, something from which humans feel alienated.⁹⁰ Not just human beings but also the Greek gods themselves are oppressed by this. Athena with all of her powers cannot prevent Achilles from being killed.

Unlike the Greek gods and goddesses, Fate or Necessity is not personified.⁹¹ The gods and goddesses all have their own specific character that serves to determine who they are and what they do; they are comprehensible, and their actions can be understood based on their characters. By contrast, Fate is not depicted as an anthropomorphic entity. It is not something that can be understood based on a specific character. It has no determinate personality, and its actions defy understanding or rational explanation. Thus one talks about *blind* necessity or fate.

This view means that humans must reconcile themselves with their fate since they cannot change it. For the Greeks, necessity simply meant “a blind obedience without freedom.”⁹² One simply has to accept that things are as they are, and one is unable to change them by one’s own free acts of will. Fate was a limit on freedom. However, one can change the terms of the relation by renouncing one’s own goals and desires which are in conflict with fate. This leads to a certain kind of freedom and satisfaction, according to Hegel:

But from this standpoint [of fate] all dissatisfaction and vexation are removed, because human beings have withdrawn into this pure rest, this pure being, this “it is.” In that abstract freedom there is on the one hand in fact no solace for human

⁸⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 651; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 543. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 162–3; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 68–9. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 469–70; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 369.

⁹⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 449; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 565. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 246; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 322f.

⁹¹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 503; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 101f.

⁹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 652; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 543.

beings. One needs solace [only] insofar as one demands a compensation for a loss; but here no compensation is needed, for one has given up the inner root of what one lost. One has wholly surrendered what has been given up. This is the aspect of freedom, but it is abstract and not concrete freedom.⁹³

With resignation of this kind, one can exercise a kind of freedom, although it is not the full realization of freedom, which would imply that the ends of the world are in harmony with one's own.

Hegel explains that this Greek conception of fate and the subsequent reaction of resignation are entirely different from our modern mindset. The typical modern emotion is that of vexation or frustration. In the modern world we set our goals and exert much time and energy pursuing them. When the world does not allow us to achieve our goals or when it offers resistance to us obtaining them, we become vexed and frustrated. The modern mind is unwilling to give up its interests and resign itself to fate.⁹⁴ Modern people are driven by a specific goal and interest that they have set for themselves and cannot be reconciled with the world if they cannot achieve these. The ancient view ascribes to human agency a rather humble role vis-à-vis the world. The world is the way it is, and we must simply accept it. By contrast, the modern view, since it has the "ought" in itself, does not recognize the validity of the world as it is on its own. One might say that it arrogantly ascribes to the individual a large amount of power in determining how the world *ought to be*, that is, the world ought to conform to my wishes.

Hegel also distinguishes the different usages of the term "fate" in the Greek view and in the modern view. The modern view is that fate is used as an explanatory principle. One says that it is a just or merited fate in the sense that it is in harmony with other events. This view sees fate as a part of the relations of cause and effect in nature. For example, when a bad thing happens to a bad person, we say that this was his fate. By contrast, for the Greeks, fate just meant that something was so or was necessary, but there was no reason behind it or no cause and effect relations that brought it about: "The intuition and worship of necessity is rather the very opposite; all such mediation and all arguments about cause and effect are sublated in it."⁹⁵

Hegel contrasts this view of the world, which opposes fate to the human will in an irreconcilable tension, with the Christian conception, which implies a reconciliation and theodicy: "In contrast, there is in the higher forms of religion the consolation that the absolutely final end will be attained despite misfortune, so that the negative changes around into the affirmative."⁹⁶

⁹³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 652; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 543f. See also *TE*, pp. 51f.; *TJ*, p. 23.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 481; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 381f. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 652; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 543–4.

⁹⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 163n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 68n.

⁹⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 653n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 544n.

Hegel believes that this fuller expression of freedom comes in Christianity, where one wishes to be reconciled with the divine and enjoy eternal bliss, and this is precisely what happens. Here one's goals are perfectly in harmony with the universe and the divine. By contrast, the Greeks live in renunciation and resignation since they must submit to a foreign force or power, necessity.⁹⁷

9.8. THE DIVINE AS MANIFEST IN INNER FEELING AND EMOTION

While we are used to thinking of the gods as something external, as entities existing independently and outside us, somewhere out in the world, for the Greeks this was only one aspect. In fact, the gods also represented different elements of the emotional and mental life of the individual and were revealed in these inward dispositions. Hegel dedicates a part of his analysis to the inward manifestations of the divine in contrast to the outward.⁹⁸ This involves the understanding of the divine as something subjective. Since the divinities play a role in human mental and emotional life, they are readily recognized by people not as something alien and other but as a part of themselves.⁹⁹ The gods are similar to human beings in what makes them individuals. Since these emotions and inward dispositions associated with the divine belong to humans themselves, they are immediately grasped and understood. In contrast to the previous religions where certain aspects of the divine were not revealed and remained mysterious, for the Greeks "there is here nothing unintelligible, nothing incomprehensible; there is in God no content that is not familiar to human beings, nothing they do not find, do not know within themselves."¹⁰⁰

Hegel gives a number of examples of the way in which the gods are active in the emotions and actions of individuals. He recalls the scene from the beginning of the *Iliad*, where Athena restrains Achilles from attacking Agamemnon. Angered by Agamemnon's insult to his honor, Achilles rashly wants to draw his sword against him, but he is stopped by Athena:

... And the anger came on Peleus' son [sc. Achilles], and within
his shaggy breast the heart was divided two ways, pondering
whether to draw from beside his thigh the sharp sword, driving

⁹⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 15; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 42.

⁹⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 662f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 554f.

⁹⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 460; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 359–60. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 642; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 534–5.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 460; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 360. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 164; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 70.

away all those who stood between and kill the son of Atreus [sc. Agamemnon],
 or else to check the spleen within and keep down his anger.
 Now as he weighed in mind and spirit these two courses
 and was drawing from its scabbard the great sword, Athene descended
 from the sky . . .
 The goddess standing behind Peleus' son caught him by the fair hair,
 appearing to him only, for no man of the others saw her.¹⁰¹

Hegel interprets this passage as follows: "According to Homer, for instance, Achilles would like to draw his sword, but he calms himself and restrains his anger. This inward prudence is Pallas, who represses anger."¹⁰² The other examples concerned the interpretation of *external* natural phenomena as having divine significance, such as the plague on the Greek camp or the stormy waters of the sea after the death of Achilles, but here the divine is at work on the *inward* emotion of a man, which is unseen by the others. The gods control not only outward nature but also human action and will.

Today when someone in a fit of anger checks himself, we regard this as an act of self-control: prudence wins out over the immediate aggressive impulse. But for the Greeks this was represented as something adventitious, Athena coming down and holding Achilles back from drawing his sword: "Achilles restrains his anger; the poet expresses this inner prudence, the restraining of anger, as the doing of Pallas."¹⁰³ This good sense is not attributed to Achilles but to some external force. Achilles is impetuous, and Athena prudent. The roles of the individual and subjective freedom are again unrecognized. But in the course of time, this external interference becomes associated with the emotions and decisions of individuals, as the principle of subjective freedom becomes more developed.

Hegel takes another example from the *Oresteia*, where the Erinyes pursue Orestes, who has murdered his mother to avenge his father. They allow him no rest or peace for having committed this crime against a blood relation. Hegel claims, "The Erinyes are not the Furies, as the representation of something externally objective, but are one's own deeds with their consequences. They are what we call conscience."¹⁰⁴ The Erinyes were conceived as something external pursuing Orestes; this element of inward life, the conscience, was not something attributed to him but to these divinities. Only later with the development of subjective freedom is conscience something associated with the individual. With its association with these deities, it is considered

¹⁰¹ See *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. by Lattimore, Book I, lines 188–98, p. 64.

¹⁰² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 478; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 378. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 236; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 311.

¹⁰³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 658n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 550n.

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 479; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 379. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 646; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 538.

something divine. As long as prudence or conscience are ascribed to the gods and not to the individual, humans are not conceived as having these divine attitudes themselves. For these reasons the inward nature of human beings is not recognized as having an absolute value in and of itself. Therefore, the intrinsic value of what it is to be human is diminished, and slavery can exist as a widespread institution in Greek culture.

Hegel refers to another example from the lyric poet Anacreon, who, in the poem "To Eros," describes his struggle with love as if it were an external force. But then he realizes that the conflict is in his own emotions. Hegel recounts the poem as follows:

Anacreon describes a contest with Eros. "I also," he says, "will now love; for a long time now it was offered me by Eros, but I would not follow. Then Eros attacked me. Armed with breastplate and lance I defended myself. Eros shot all his arrows but then leapt right into my very heart. What use," he concludes, "are bow and arrow to me then? The combat is right within me." So in this recognition and worship the subject is simply at home, the gods are the subject's own *πάθος*.¹⁰⁵

The key point here is that the poet comes to realize that the gods are his own emotions despite what seem to be their external representations. Love is not something that just happens to one from the outside but rather comes from within.

Now for the first time human emotions and dispositions are taken to be of importance and indeed divine. This marks a significant step in the development of religion and human freedom. This strengthens the value of the individual in a way that was unthinkable before, when the individual was regarded as being something inessential and continuous with nature: "Knowledge of the gods is not knowing them as abstractions beyond actuality, but rather is knowing one's own concrete objective subjectivity, for the gods are also within one."¹⁰⁶ Religious alienation is well on its way to being overcome: "The [divine] powers are well disposed and friendly [toward] human beings, dwell within their breast; and human beings actualize them and know their actuality to be at the same time their *own* actuality."¹⁰⁷ The gods are not conceived as external entities that tyrannize over human beings. Rather they are found inwardly in human emotions and attitudes. The notion that human emotions and needs are something divine anticipates the Roman religion, which Hegel treats next in the sequence of the religions of spirit.

With the recognition that the inward life of the individual is something divine, the foundation is laid for a meaningful theory of immortality. This was

¹⁰⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 480n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 380n. See *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 735f. The editors of *LPR* take Hegel's source to be *Anakreon und Sapphos Lieder nebenst andern lyrischen Gedichten*, ed. and trans. by Johann Friedrich Degen, 2nd ed., Leipzig: Aug. Gottl. Liebeskind 1821, "Auf den Eros," pp. 36–9.

¹⁰⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 480n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 380n.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

a key point in Hegel's reasoning for placing the Greek religion higher than Judaism. In the following passage he contrasts the Greek and the Jewish conception on just this point:

At the stages we have considered previously, the postulate of the immortality of the soul still cannot occur (neither in nature nor in the religion of the One [sc. Judaism]). In the former, the unmediated unity of the natural and the spiritual is still the basic characteristic, and spirit does not exist on its own account. In the religion of the One, spirit exists on its own account of course, but it is still unfulfilled, its freedom is still abstract, and its being is still a natural one—the possession of a particular territory and its prosperity. But this is not being as the determinate being of spirit within itself, and the satisfaction does not lie in the spiritual. Duration is only duration of the tribe, of the family, of natural universality in general.¹⁰⁸

In contrast to the Jews, the Greeks, in time, take subjectivity to be something absolute:

in as much as the subject can acquire, in ethical life, an infinite value, or inasmuch as individuality in general is taken up into universal substantiality, there emerges at this point the representational image of the eternal character of the subjective individual spirit—the immortality of the soul.¹⁰⁹

This is precisely the principle of subjective freedom. The individual is not obliged to accept rules, principles, habits, or accepted customs unless he finds them to be in harmony with his own views. He has the right to consent to these as a representation of his own will. This right was absent in traditional cultures, according to Hegel, and is the mark of a modern view. The recognition that the truth has this subjective element is at the same time a recognition that there is something absolute and enduring about the subject. Here we see the basis for the Greek conception of immortality that Hegel praises.

9.9. THE TRANSITION TO THE ROMAN RELIGION

Hegel observes that the Greek gods have a variety of purposes: Athena aids Achilles, Apollo supports Hector, Zeus has numerous amorous affairs, etc. These purposes do not necessarily have anything to do with the general concept of these divinities; indeed, there is no discernible *logos* or rationality in them.¹¹⁰ The interests and actions of the gods make them specific individualities and personalities just like human beings, who all have their own

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 166n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 72n.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 166; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 71f.

¹¹⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 189; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 95.

interests and goals. There thus arises a split between the general concept of a specific deity and the purposes that they pursue, for example, between Zeus' role as god of civic life and justice and his seduction of goddesses and mortal women. This contradiction leads to the next stage of religious development, the Roman religion, which resolves it.

According to Hegel, the Roman gods are primarily deities devoted to specific purposes, who have lost the more general characteristics of the Greek gods of beauty. For the Romans, the goal of everything, including the gods, is utility, function, and practicality. For the Greeks, the gods determined their own arbitrary purposes in a free manner, but for the Romans it is the human purposes which determine the gods.¹¹¹ There is thus a shift from broad and general spheres of action and responsibility that one sees in the Greek gods, such as Poseidon ruling the sea and Zeus ruling the state, to specific goals and purposes that one finds among the Roman divinities.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Roman Polytheism

The Religion of Expediency

Hegel's account of Roman polytheism is a reflection of an extended occupation with Roman history and culture. He knew Latin from an early age and was well read in Roman literature.¹ As a schoolboy in Stuttgart, he read Cicero's letters and translated Tacitus' *Agricola*.² As a youth he wrote a diary that was partly in Latin.³ Some of his earliest literary attempts reflect an interest in Roman culture; these include a dialogue, based on Shakespeare's drama *Julius Caesar*, between the three men who formed the Second Triumvirate, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, Mark Antony, and Octavian.⁴ As noted in Chapter 9, there is also an early essay, "On the Religion of the Greeks and Romans," which represents Hegel's first attempt to understand the nature of religion among the ancients.⁵ In the early text, "On Some Characteristic Distinctions of the Ancient Poets," the young Hegel refers to the poets Tibullus and Horace.⁶ As a student in Tübingen, Hegel studied Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*.⁷ In accordance with the custom of the day, at the beginning of his time in Jena he wrote his *Habilitation* thesis, *On the Orbits of the Planets*, in Latin.⁸ On special occasions in his official capacity as professor in Berlin he gave formal speeches in Latin.⁹ While there can be no doubt that Hegel preferred Greek culture to Roman culture, he had a profound knowledge of the latter and was occupied with it at virtually every period of his life.

¹ See Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1844, pp. 10ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11, p. 12.

³ Hegel, "Tagebuch" in *Dokumente*, pp. 6–41.

⁴ Hegel, "A Conversation of Three: A Scene from Julius Caesar," *MW*, pp. 3–7; *Dokumente*, pp. 3–6.

⁵ Hegel, "On the Religion of the Greeks and Romans," *MW*, pp. 8–13; *Dokumente*, pp. 43–8.

⁶ Hegel, "On Some Characteristic Distinctions of the Ancient Poets," *MW*, pp. 14–18; *Dokumente*, pp. 48–51.

⁷ See Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*, p. 25. See also H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770–1801*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1972, p. 73.

⁸ Hegel, *MW*, pp. 163–206; *Jub.*, vol. 1, pp. 1–29.

⁹ Hegel, *Jub.*, vol. 20, pp. 521–44.

Various aspects of the Roman world consistently play an important role in most all the grand narratives that he tells about the different spheres of culture. In addition to the account of the Roman religion in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,¹⁰ he also gives an extensive treatment of Roman culture in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.¹¹ This can be seen as a more detailed account of the brief analysis that he originally gave many years earlier in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹² He treats different aspects of Roman art and culture in a number of different places in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*.¹³ Given all this, it is rather surprising that, as was the case with his treatment of the Greek religion, there is very limited secondary literature on his treatment of the religious practices and ideas of the Romans.

10.1. HEGEL'S SOURCES

Hegel's sources of information about the Roman religion could in principle include most anything at all from the Roman classics.¹⁴ In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* reference is explicitly made to Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*, the works of history by Ammianus Marcellinus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the poetry of Virgil and Horace, and the dramas of Seneca. Hegel also seems to draw on the historians Cassius Dio and Suetonius, without referring to them explicitly. In his account of Rome in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* he also refers to the historians Appian, Livy, Plutarch, Polybius, and Tacitus. Given his vast knowledge of Roman literature and history, it seems safe to assume that his views are based on other ancient works as well.

With regard to modern sources it is clear that he was familiar with the full range of scholarship on Roman civilization that existed during his time—and not just in the field of classical studies. He mentions unnamed works of “historians, philologists and jurists,”¹⁵ which he draws on. Fueled by Winckelmann's publications, a renewed interest in Rome arose, and a number of scholars from the

¹⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 190–231; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 96–137. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 498–512; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 397–410. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 687–99; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 579–91. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 758–60; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 639–42. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 288–323; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 156–88. *RGI*, pp. 192–242.

¹¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 278–318; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 361–409. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 426–60, especially pp. 433–6; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 393–438, especially pp. 402–6. *GRW*, pp. 661–719.

¹² Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 290–4; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 367–72.

¹³ See, for example, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 512–16; *Jub.*, vol. 13, pp. 113–19.

¹⁴ For Hegel's sources see the “Editorial Introduction” in *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 11–12, pp. 25–30, pp. 55–6, pp. 71–2, p. 86.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 279; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 363.

German-speaking world, such as Goethe, made the trip to Italy to see the archeological sites and the new finds for themselves.

One of the key figures in Latin studies during Hegel's day was the Dane Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831), who is not to be confused with his father Carsten Niebuhr, who was famous for his journey to Arabia. The younger Niebuhr taught at the University of Berlin and produced his famous *Römische Geschichte* in two volumes from 1811–12, a work that was based on his popular lectures.¹⁶ This landmark text was the beginning of the critical, scholarly approach to Roman history. His analysis of the Roman Republic and the conflict of the orders was especially influential. Hegel refers to this work, at times in a polemical manner, in his treatment of Rome in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.¹⁷ Niebuhr travelled to Rome as Prussian ambassador in 1816, a position he held until 1823; he spent his remaining years in Bonn. Thus he was not in Berlin during Hegel's time there. In Italy he made a number of discoveries of ancient Latin texts, which he subsequently published.

Also in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel refers to the work of Dietrich Hermann Hegewisch (1746–1812), who was a professor of history in Kiel. Hegel references Hegewisch's book, *Über die für die Menschheit glücklichste Epoche in der römischen Geschichte*,¹⁸ in which the author takes up a discussion with Edward Gibbon's landmark *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. (Hegel also owned an edition of this work from 1821.)¹⁹ Gibbon claimed that the period in the Roman Empire from the emperor Nerva to the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius marked the happiest period in human history. Hegewisch seconds this encomium of the Roman Empire and hails it as a model of social harmony. Hegel praises Hegewisch's account of the introduction of the agrarian laws in the Roman Republic and criticizes Niebuhr's attempt to take credit for what had already been established in Hegewisch's book.²⁰ The works of Niebuhr and Hegewisch were important for Hegel's general understanding of the history and social order of the Romans,

¹⁶ Barthold Georg Niebuhr, *Römische Geschichte*, vols 1–2, Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung 1811–12. A second edition appeared from 1827–30 (Berlin: G. Reimer) and a third edition of the first volume in 1828 (Berlin: G. Reimer). A posthumous third volume with a register was added in 1832 (Berlin: G. Reimer). See Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship*, trans. by Alan Harris, ed. by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, London: Duckworth 1982, pp. 117–20. John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vols 1–3, New York and London: Hafner Publishing Company 1967, vol. 3, pp. 77–82.

¹⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 280f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 364. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 297; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 384. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 302; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 390. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 303; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 391.

¹⁸ D.H. Hegewisch, *Über die für die Menschheit glücklichste Epoche in der römischen Geschichte*, Hamburg: F. Perthes 1800.

¹⁹ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. A New Edition*, vols 1–12, Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer 1821. See *Hegel's Library*, 1016–27. See also *Jub.*, vol. 1, p. 497.

²⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 302; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 391.

but they presumably did not provide him with so much explicit information about the Roman religion.

For descriptions of the Roman gods, Hegel makes use of information provided by Karl Philipp Moritz in his *ANΘΟΥΣΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*.²¹ This work is about the numerous Roman festivals and religious practices, which Moritz goes through in detail month-for-month, based on the date in the calendar year when they were celebrated. Since each of the festivals is dedicated to a specific god or goddess, Moritz also has occasion to discuss the different Roman divinities. He explains in some detail the nature and characteristics of the Roman gods in connection with his accounts of the origins of and traditions associated with the festivals. One can see in the “loose sheets” that Hegel wrote in connection with his lectures how he takes notes from Moritz’s work.²² From his extensive use of this material, it is fair to say that this is probably Hegel’s main source of information about the Roman religion in general. However, as the editors of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* have pointed out,²³ this does not mean that Hegel was in agreement with Moritz’s conclusions. On the contrary, he seems to want to refute them. He is critical of Moritz’s association of the Roman religion with the Greek religion and, as will be seen below, insists on seeing them as reflecting two different concepts. Hegel is presumably interested in Moritz’s work because of the empirical information it provides about Roman religious practices.

Unsurprisingly, Hegel again draws on the work of his friend Creuzer for his treatment of the Roman religion.²⁴ However, compared to other analyses that Hegel has given, Creuzer’s influence seems rather limited here since he is only referenced directly a single time.²⁵ There, in the lectures from 1824, Hegel refers to Creuzer’s claim that the Roman religion must be fundamentally distinguished from the Greek.²⁶ As will be seen in the next section, this was

²¹ Karl Philipp Moritz, *ANΘΟΥΣΑ oder Roms Alterthümer. Ein Buch für die Menschheit. Die heiligen Gebräuche der Römer*, Berlin: Friedrich Maurer 1791. (See LPR, vol. 2, p. 188; VPR, Part 2, p. 94. See *Hegel’s Library*, 708.) As has been seen above, Hegel had made use of Moritz’s *Götterlehre* in his account of the Greek gods: Karl Philipp Moritz, *Götterlehre oder mythologische Dichtungen der Alten*, Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger 1791.

²² Hegel, LPR, vol. 2, pp. 765–6; VPR, Part 2, pp. 646–7. See also LPR, vol. 2, pp. 206–19; VPR, Part 2, pp. 112–24.

²³ See the “Editorial Introduction” in LPR, vol. 2, p. 11, p. 26.

²⁴ Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1810–12. (See also Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vols 1–4, 2nd fully revised edition, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Heyer und Leske 1819–21.)

²⁵ Hegel, LPR, vol. 2, p. 501; VPR, Part 2, p. 400.

²⁶ Hegel refers to the second edition of Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vol. 2 (1820), p. 992. Creuzer refers to Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ *Roman Antiquities*, Book 2.18ff.

an important point in Hegel's analysis.²⁷ It should also be noted that Hegel owned a copy of a work by Creuzer specifically dedicated to Rome, namely *Abriss der Römischen Antiquitäten* from 1824.²⁸

10.2. "GRAVITAS" AND THE CONTRAST OF THE GREEK RELIGION WITH THE ROMAN

Hegel begins the historical part of his analysis by noting that it has been traditional to treat Greek and Roman religion together since there seems to be a general correspondence among their divinities, with people immediately associating, for example, Jupiter with Zeus and Neptune with Poseidon. But in fact, he claims, they represent two quite different general conceptions.²⁹ Hegel repeats his basic view that religion is closely connected with other forms of human culture such as art and politics, a connection that is included in the concept of "spirit." But since the Romans and the Greeks had such different political developments, their cultures and religions were fundamentally distinct. While there were brief periods in Greek history when individual city-states, such as Athens or Sparta, held together a fragile empire, the Greeks, with the exception of the short-lived empire of Alexander the Great, never approached anything close to Rome's domination of Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor. The Roman Empire represents something special and distinct, which had an influence on the Roman religion and set it on a course very different from that of the Greeks, despite the superficial correspondence of their gods. For this reason, according to Hegel, the two religious conceptions must be treated separately and their differences emphasized.

Hegel claims that one of the key distinguishing features about the Romans was their sense of seriousness, earnestness, or "*gravitas*."³⁰ He believes that this characteristic derives from their fundamentally practical disposition towards the world. Managing a vast empire means attending to a large number of practical things, for example, maintaining an army, securing the food supply, and running a complex legal system. Roman seriousness consists in fulfilling these numerous fixed goals or purposes efficiently. Hegel takes this to be an important point of contrast with the Greek religion. For the Greeks, the individual gods had a variety of individual powers and characteristics, but

²⁷ See also *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 289f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 374f. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 433; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 402.

²⁸ Friedrich Creuzer, *Abriss der Römischen Antiquitäten zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesungen*, Leipzig and Darmstadt: Karl Wilhelm Leske 1824 (*Hegel's Library*, 683).

²⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 207; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 113. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 691; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 582–3. *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 289f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 374f. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 433; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 402.

³⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 501; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 400. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 691; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 583.

they were never fixed to their goals or ends in a dogged way. Rather, they maintained a kind of ironic distance from their goals: "The gods are not tied to a singular existence; they are essential powers and are at the same time the expression of irony in regard to what they seek to do. For they attach no importance to the singular, empirical outcome."³¹ One important reason for this has to do with the Greek notion of fate which hung above even the gods. Since fate occasionally enjoined individuals to modify their objectives and ends, people adopted a flexible relation to these. When fate prevented them from carrying out their projects, they simply changed their goals.

The relation to the given goals makes the Greek gods in a sense more human than the Roman gods. The former represent something ideal that transcends these individual forms and ends. The latter, by contrast, do not float above the empirical and the actual realm of ends but rather are sunk in it, and their very concept depends on it. The feature of seriousness comes in here since the Romans are focused on a single, clear end, a "supreme principle,"³² and there is no irony about it or distance toward it. The Greek gods are richer as personalities and individuals since they have within themselves a number of different qualities and characteristics, some of which are even contradictory. This gives the Greek gods an element of contingency since their actions are often disconnected from the forces or traits that they are ostensibly associated with. The Greek gods can be fickle and light-minded, changing their minds just as humans tend to do. By contrast, the Roman gods are one-dimensional since they are fixed on a single end and are not anything more complex than this end.

Hegel notes that this contrast between the Greek and Roman religion was pointed out by Dionysius of Halicarnassus.³³ In praising the ancient Roman temperament in the person of Rome's legendary founder Romulus, the Greek historian writes that while Romulus did much for religion such as creating temples, religious festivals, and religious statues and images,

he rejected all the traditional myths concerning the gods that contain blasphemies or calumnies against them, looking upon these as wicked, useless, and indecent, and unworthy, not only of the gods, but even of good men; and he accustomed people both to think and to speak the best of the gods and to attribute to them no conduct unworthy of their blessed nature. Indeed, there is no tradition among the Romans either of Caelus being castrated by his own sons or of Saturn destroying his own offspring to secure himself from their attempts or of Jupiter dethroning Saturn and confining his own father in the dungeon of Tartarus, or, indeed, of wars, wounds, or bonds of the gods, or of their servitude among men.³⁴

³¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 501; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 400.

³² See *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 692; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 584.

³³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 501–2; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 400.

³⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities*, vols 1–7, trans. by Earnest Cary, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1961–71 (*Loeb Classical Library*), vol. 1, p. 363 (Book II, Chapters 18–19).

Hegel was apparently made attentive to this passage from Creuzer's discussion of it since he refers to it directly in this context.³⁵ While the Roman religious practice shares many things in common with the Greek with its "temples, altars, divine worship, sacrifice, solemn religious gatherings, festivals, etc.,"³⁶ it nonetheless is fundamentally devoid of what might be regarded as the child-like aspects of the Greek conception of the divine: "the myths that depicted the gods with blasphemous features, their mutilations, imprisonments, wars, bargaining, and so on."³⁷ (Here Hegel more or less directly quotes from Creuzer's account.) Clearly, reference here is made to the stories of Zeus' illicit loves affairs, Hera's jealous acts of revenge, the castration of Uranus by his son Cronos, and all of the other odd stories about the Greek gods that seem so unbecoming of divinities.

Hegel's interpretation is that this feature of the Greek religion is eliminated in the Roman religion since the Roman gods are closely attached to specific ends. The Roman gods have important tasks to attend to and cannot be bothered by such silly things as illicit sexual liaisons. This leaves little leeway for the rich variations that one sees in Greek mythology. The Roman gods reflect an element of seriousness with respect to their actions and goals. The Greek gods, by contrast, are not bound by any such fixed principles, and the imagination is free to invent different kinds of stories about them.

10.3. JUPITER AND THE SUPREME END OF THE ROMAN RELIGION

Jupiter is the highest of the Roman gods, but, for Hegel, it would be a mistake to think of him as an analogue to Zeus. Jupiter has a very specific goal, which is the end of the entire Roman religion. Hegel declares that the ultimate purpose

³⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 501–2; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 400. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (2nd fully revised edition, 1819–21), vol. 2, p. 992: "In einer auszeichnungswerthen Stelle (*Antiqq. Romm.* II. 18 sq. p. 273 Reisk.) gedenkt [*Dionysius*] der Weisheit der religiösen Einrichtungen des Romulus, und zeigt den grossen Vorzug der alt-Römischen Religion vor der Griechischen. Jene habe ihre Tempel, geweihte Oerter, Altäre, Götterbilder und Symbole; auch lehre sie von den Kräften und Wohlthaten der Götter gegen das menschliche Geschlechte; auch feiere sie Feste, Opfer, habe gottesdienstliche Versammlungen, Ruhetage und Gottesfrieden mit den Griechen gemein. Dagegen die von diesen überlieferten Mythen, mit allen den blasphemischen Zügen von Götterkämpfen, Verstümmelungen, Wunden, Tod, Gefangenschaft und Claveri der Götter, habe die Religion der Römer sammt und sonders ausgestossen."

³⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 502; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 400.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

of the Romans and thus of their gods was the sovereignty or dominion of the world.³⁸ By this he clearly refers to the steady expansion of Rome throughout the Mediterranean and then Europe until it had conquered most of the known world. This is the supreme end that the Romans seek: conquest and maintenance of a world empire. It is represented by their highest divinities:

This dominion, this dominating authority, is none other than the city of Rome itself, and the lordship consists in necessity or fortune. There was in Rome a temple dedicated to Fortuna Publica. This divine ruler also takes the shape of Jupiter, but with a different meaning than Zeus—he is essentially Jupiter Capitolinus.³⁹

Each of these three divinities represents a different aspect of the highest goal. *Fortuna* is the goddess of good fortune or prosperity. As Hegel indicates, this can be conceived as *Fortuna publica*, representing this principle in the public sphere, i.e., the state, or as *Fortuna privata*, representing this principle in the private sphere, i.e., of the family and friends.⁴⁰ Hegel points to the worship of the former as characteristic of the Romans' fixation on cultivating their empire. The goddess Roma represents the city itself, i.e., *Dea Roma*. Thus this goddess represents not the empire and its fortunes as a whole but rather just its capital, even though there were temples dedicated to this goddess throughout the empire. Her images bear a strong resemblance to the Greek Athena, who might have served as a model. Jupiter is the supreme god, the ruler of all the other gods and the world, usually referred to as Jupiter Optimus Maximus, i.e., Jupiter the Best and the Greatest. The name Jupiter Capitolinus refers to the dwelling place of Jupiter in the grand temple in ancient Rome, located on the Capitoline Hill, and thus the name Jupiter on the Capitoline.

Hegel contrasts this notion of Jupiter Capitolinus with Zeus and Jehovah from the two preceding religions.⁴¹ In Homer the Greek gods have their favorites whom they watch out for and help when in peril. Certain gods are positively disposed towards specific individuals and families, and thus the gods are set against one another when these individuals and families come into conflict. Thus just as the different Greek states fight against Troy, so also the different gods aligned with the two sides fight against one another. In Judaism Jehovah promises to protect a single family: he is the god of Abraham, of Isaac,

³⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 211f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 117f. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 500; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 398–9. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 503; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 401.

³⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 503; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 402. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 292; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 378. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 212f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 116f. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 692; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 584. See Moritz, *ANΘΥΣΙΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*, pp. 126–7.

⁴⁰ In addition to these two, there were also many further epithets for the goddess Fortuna that specified further areas where good luck or prosperity was desired, e.g., Fortuna Muliebris (good fortune for women), Fortuna Virginensis (good fortune for newly married women), Fortuna Virilis (good fortune for young men), etc.

⁴¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 503; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 402.

etc. In both cases this represents something overly determined, excluding other peoples who do not belong to the right family or group. This conception comes from people who are constantly at war with their neighbors and are forever distinguishing themselves as a group from them. Now Hegel points out that this exclusiveness and particularity is corrected in the Roman religion. The Romans united numerous peoples into their multinational empire, all of which came under the auspices and protection of Jupiter. Thus the single family under the protection of Jehovah is universalized to include all the citizens of the empire. The purpose of the world that was too narrow and specific in the Greek religion and Judaism now becomes universal, extending in principle to all human beings and not just to a select group.

Hegel claims that this conception of the highest divinity as representing sovereignty over the world is understood as an abstract power and not so much as a specific individual with a personality. As a result, the individual element is missing from this divinity and thus excluded from the supreme goal. This marks another important difference between the Greek and Roman gods. The latter are not animated by the same lively personalities as individuals as the former. Jupiter is the abstract power of hegemony or domination and not an individual. He does not have the full character of personality as Zeus and in this regard seems much less anthropomorphic.

The idea of sovereignty is an external, practical goal. The success of the Roman state is something that takes place in the external world. It is not something inward, concerning spirit as with the goal of Christianity. Hegel contrasts the two religions as follows:

Just as in Christianity it is said that God wills that all should come to a knowledge of the truth, so too in Islam the purpose is universal actualization, but of a spiritual nature, and individuals have their place in it as thinking, spiritual, free individuals; they are present in it, and the whole purpose is focused on them—it is not an external purpose. In this way they take the whole scope of the purpose into themselves. At the present stage, on the other hand, the purpose is still an external, empirical purpose, an all-encompassing purpose on the plane of empirical reality—i.e., the purpose is a *world dominion*. The inherent purpose is one that is external to the individual, and it becomes ever more so the more that it is realized and externalized, so that the individual is merely subordinated to the purpose, merely *serves* it.⁴²

For Hegel this is a demonstration of the strongly empirical aspect of Roman culture, which shuns what is abstract and what exists in thought. Christianity aims at a spiritual, inward conversion of the individual. It concerns the inward subjectivity of each human being but is not something visible from the outside.

⁴² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 500; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 399.

By contrast, the Roman religion aims at clearly visible success in the external world in the form of the empire.

10.4. THE OTHER DEITIES AND THE FINITE ENDS OF THE ROMAN RELIGION

Just as the supreme deity Jupiter is lacking in the principle of personality or individuality, so also the other gods appear lifeless and lacking the aspect of spirit. The Roman gods do not have “free individuality as in Greece. They appear to be old and gray, so to speak.”⁴³ Hegel claims that these gods are lacking a true element of spirit: “There is not to be found in them that consciousness of feeling or humanity and subjectivity which is the substantial element in gods as it is in humans, and in humans as in gods. They show themselves to be derivative; they appear to be machinery devoid of sense.”⁴⁴ The later Roman writers like Virgil and Horace attempted to imitate the Greek gods in their poetry, but these later imitations pale by comparison to the originals.⁴⁵ The gods in these poetic works lack the vibrancy and life of the Greek divinities. They are clearly artificial constructions that are in many ways forced onto the Romans living at the time of these writers in the 1st century BC.

Hegel believes that this aspect of the divine is reflected in the fact that the individual Roman citizens were largely disconnected from the absolute, supreme goal of sovereignty: “Dominion is the goal of the citizen; but the individual is not wholly taken up with that. The individual has also a practical purpose, and these practical purposes fall outside of that abstract purpose.”⁴⁶ Roman citizens have a multitude of other private interests that they pursue in addition to the larger, general goal of the state, which can presumably seem quite abstract and distant. The other finite ends of human beings that lie outside the supreme end of the state then serve to generate the different lower divinities, who are in charge of their specific end or purpose.⁴⁷

According to Hegel, this is a very significant shift since now it is the needs of human beings that dictate the nature of the gods. In a sense the gods come down from their transcendent position in order to help humans with their specific goals and desires in the actual world. The gods are a reflection of the

⁴³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 693; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 584f. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 503; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 402.

⁴⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 693; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 585.

⁴⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 503; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 402. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 693; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 585. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 293; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 379. See also *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, pp. 1073–5; *Jub.*, vol. 14, pp. 369–72. *Difference*, p. 89; *Jub.*, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 693f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 585.

⁴⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 694; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 586.

needs of the individuals. By contrast, the Greeks were more flexible with regard to the ends that they conceived for themselves; since these ends could be thwarted by fate, they were not considered ultimately definitive. The Romans, however, regard their own goals as supremely important. For the Romans, the gods serve the ends of the worshippers, and this shows a sense of recognition of the principle of subjectivity. The individual's particular wants, desires, and goals count for something important. Indeed, these subjective elements are so important that they are deified.

While the Romans regarded Jupiter as the highest god, representing the sovereignty of the state, they also had a whole series of lesser deities who were each in charge of his or her own specific sphere; indeed, some of these are so specific that they appear trivial. All of the individual tasks and projects of daily life are elevated to a divine status and objectified as divinities. Hegel explains:

The chief characteristic of Roman religion is therefore a hard and dry contemplation of certain voluntary aims, which they regard as existing absolutely in their divinities, and whose accomplishment they desire of them as embodying absolute power. These purposes constitute that for the sake of which they worship the gods, and by which, in a constrained, limited way, they are bound to their deities. The Roman religion is therefore the entirely *prosaic* one of narrow aspirations, expediency, profit.⁴⁸

Instead of being grounded in some sublime principle or idea, the Roman religion is instead firmly attached to the most mundane activities. Hegel goes through a list of different Roman gods which are associated with banal things related to everyday Roman life.⁴⁹

The head of the Roman pantheon Jupiter has a manifold of different names or epithets representing different aspects of the deity or even different deities (Jupiter Custos, Jupiter Dapalis, Jupiter Dolichenus, Jupiter Elicius, Jupiter Feretrius, Jupiter Fulgor, Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Jupiter Invictus, Jupiter Lapis, Jupiter Liber, Jupiter Libertas, Jupiter Lucetius, Jupiter Pluvius, Jupiter Propugnator, Jupiter Stator, Jupiter Tonans, Jupiter Victor).⁵⁰ As the Romans conquered different peoples and incorporated their divinities into the Roman pantheon, a problem was created since the other deities potentially challenged the idea of Jupiter as being the highest god. The solution was to claim that the local deities were the same as Jupiter even though they had different names. So many additional names were added to Jupiter to reflect the different local deities. For example, Jupiter Dolichenus was the Jupiter of the town of Doliche in Asia Minor, which worshiped the god Baal. Jupiter Heliopolitanus was the Jupiter of the town of Heliopolis (also in Asia Minor). Jupiter Latialis was

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 291f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 377.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 434; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 404. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 292; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 377.

⁵⁰ See Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 216; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 121.

the Jupiter of the area of Latium around Rome. In this way the locals could continue to worship their own gods while at the same time paying homage to Jupiter and thus to Rome.

In addition to the geographical epithets, there were others that designated different aspects of the actions and activities of Jupiter. Unsurprisingly, one set of epithets concerns military matters: Jupiter Stator gave the Romans courage and prevented them from fleeing in the face of the enemy.⁵¹ Along the same lines there is Jupiter Invictus, or “the unconquered” and Jupiter Victor, “the victorious,” that is, the Jupiter who led the Romans to victory. Another set of epithets concerns meteorological phenomena: Jupiter Fulgor was the aspect of Jupiter that was responsible for sending lightning, Jupiter Tonans, for sending thunder, and Jupiter Pluvius, for sending rain.

Hegel seizes on one odd appellation, namely, Jupiter Pistor or “the baker.” He explains, “Jupiter Pistor is the god of the bakers, for the art of baking was a gift of the god.”⁵² This has been interpreted in various ways. It might mean that Jupiter is the protector of the guild of bakers. Alternatively, this epithet could have its origin in the siege of Rome by the Gauls; when the Romans were running out of supplies, the idea was hit upon that they should hide their problem by casting out loaves of bread to the besieging enemy in order to give them the misleading impression that they had a wealth of provisions. In any case, Hegel’s point is that it is a strikingly strange notion to have the highest of the gods associated with something so trivial as baking. It is difficult for the modern mind to understand how such an activity can have the status of a divinity.

Along the same lines Hegel mentions the goddess Fornax, who is likewise associated with the chores of daily life.⁵³ As Hegel indicates, the word “*fornax*” literally means an oven. Hegel’s source here was presumably Moritz’s *ANΘΟΥΣΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*, where it is explained that this goddess was celebrated while the grain was being dried in the oven.⁵⁴ The practice was an important measure to ensure the safety of the grain supply, which was often vulnerable to fire. After the grain was dried, it would be crushed and mixed with water to make the dough. This was the main food source of the Romans for centuries. The goddess Fornax was celebrated with a festival known as the

⁵¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 215f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 121. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 505; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 403.

⁵² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 505; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 403. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 217; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 122. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 695; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 586. See Moritz, *ANΘΟΥΣΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*, p. 147: “Wie heilig man dasjenige hielt, worauf die Ernährung des Körpers und die Erhaltung des Lebens beruhet, erhellet auch daraus, daß dem höchsten Jupiter selber unter dem Nahmen Jupiter Pistor oder Jupiter der Becker, auf dem Kapitolinischen Berge ein Altar geweiht war, auf welchem man ihm bei der Feier der Vestalien ebenfalls Opfer darbrachte.”

⁵³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 505; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 403. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 434f.; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 404. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 217; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 122. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 695; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 586–7.

⁵⁴ See Moritz, *ANΘΟΥΣΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*, pp. 44f., p. 146.

Fornacalia. With these rites the grain and bread were revered as something sacred. Again a goddess of the oven seems to be a very foreign concept to the modern mind. The association of the gods with such everyday matters seems to undermine the sublimity and dignity that we associate with the divine.

Hegel then turns to the goddess Vesta, who is celebrated by, among others, the Vestal Virgins.⁵⁵ Vesta is the goddess of the hearth and fire; she protected not only altar fires but also any fire from a private hearth. In the latter context Hegel can say that this means that she is “used for making bread.” Etymologically Vestia is identified with the Greek *Ἑστία* or Hestia,⁵⁶ which Hegel associates with the ethical principle of family piety. For Hegel, this is a “higher meaning” than simply the notion of fire for baking bread. This identification comes from the fact that Hestia has the same functions as the Roman Vesta and is closely connected to the hearth. The idea of a goddess of the fire can be seen to go hand-in-hand with the idea of a goddess of the oven. Both are needed in order to make bread. Here one can see that the deification of fire has come a very long way from the conception in Zoroastrianism, where it was a universal principle of light and good. Instead of being a natural or moral concept, it has now degenerated into a purely practical one.

Hegel then turns to the divinity Pales, who is represented as both a male and a female deity. Hegel refers to the female variant: “They had festivals devoted to pigs, sheep, and cattle as well as the Palilia, the festival of the goddess of cattle fodder.”⁵⁷ Pales was thus the divinity who helped the shepherds and protected their flocks. The divinity attested to the importance of herding and domestic animals in Roman life.

Hegel also refers to the “*Dea Cloacina*,” the goddess of the drain or the sewer.⁵⁸ This was an earlier Etruscan goddess, who later came to be identified with Venus and known as Venus Cloacina. There was a shrine dedicated to her in the Roman Forum. The *cloaca* was the sewer system in Rome, and the *cloaca maxima* was the great drain. This divinity was the goddess of cleanliness and filth. The Romans were aware of the importance of sanitation for the prosperity of their city. Thus this odd conception of a deity also plays a very practical role in Roman affairs.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 505; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 403. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 217; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 122. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 695; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 587.

⁵⁶ See for instance Cicero, *De natura deorum*, Book II.67. (English translation: Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, trans. by Horace C.P. McGregor, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972, p. 150.)

⁵⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 505; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 403. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 217; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 122. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 695; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 587. See Moritz, *ANΘΟΥΣΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*, p. 103: “Eines der ältesten und unschuldigsten ländlichen Feste waren die Palilien, wodurch man die Pales sich geneigt zu machen suchte, welche dem Futter der Thiere Gebethen gab, und in deren Obhut die Hirten ihre Heerden empfahlen, um sie vor allem Schädlichen zu bewahren.”

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 292; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 377.

It was important in a vast empire to have a common Roman currency to facilitate trade. In this connection Hegel notes that one aspect of Juno was that she was the goddess of coins, and thus her image appeared on Roman coins: "In regard to the Roman state also, utilities of this kind were venerated as essential—for example, Juno Moneta, the art of minting being an essential one."⁵⁹ Juno in this aspect was thus the patron of money or Roman currency. The main Roman mint was located on the Capitoline Hill, which was filled with the numerous temples, shrines, and altars of the gods. Juno Moneta was also celebrated with an annual festival. Romans who found themselves in pecuniary need directed their prayers to her.

But like Jupiter, Juno had numerous other appellations in addition to this one. Hegel explains a few others critically as follows:

Juno appears among the Romans not merely as "Lucina," the obstetric goddess, but also as "Juno Ossipagina," the divinity who forms the bones of the child, and as "Juno Unxia," who anoints the hinges of the doors at marriages (a matter which was also reckoned among the "sacra"). How little have these prosaic conceptions in common with the beauty of the spiritual powers and deities of the Greeks!⁶⁰

Juno Lucina was the goddess of childbirth, who was prayed to by women who were pregnant or in labor. As Hegel notes, Juno Ossipagina strengthens the bones of infants.⁶¹ Juno Unxia is a goddess of marriage who helps the bride to anoint the door of the home where the newly married couple will live, so that they can auspiciously enter.⁶²

Hegel's point with these many examples is that there is something counter-intuitive to us today about making gods and goddesses for these kinds of daily activities. We tend to associate the divine with something sublime, dignified, extraordinary, and powerful, but these kinds of mundane activities seem completely trivial. We can perhaps understand a god of the ocean or of the sun, but it is more difficult to understand a god of the sewer or the oven, which, comparatively, represent quite minor and pedestrian spheres of life. The Roman gods are associated with practical uses and functions even down to the smallest details.

These gods are all positive in the sense that they fulfill some function and satisfy some specific desire or need. However, this implies that there must also

⁵⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 505; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 403. See also Hegel, *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 435; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 404. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 216; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 121. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 695; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 587. See Moritz, *ANΘΡΩΠΕΙΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*, pp. 128–9.

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 292; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 377f.

⁶¹ See Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, 2nd fully revised edition, vol. 2, p. 560.

⁶² See *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 559.

be opposites to these.⁶³ Since humans are aware of their desires and needs and the fulfillment of them, they are also aware of the problems leading to the lack of fulfillment. This then ushers in another set of gods and goddess who are negative in character. Hegel explains, "Allegorical, prosaic essences of this kind, however, are primarily and essentially those which are basically characterized by a shortcoming, harm or damage. For example, the Romans dedicated altars to the plague, and also to fever, Febris, and the goddess Angerona, care and woe. They venerated hunger, Fames, and Robigo, wheat rust."⁶⁴ These gods and goddesses all have the double meaning since, on the one hand, they are the causes of the negative elements that torment humans and make life more difficult, but, on the other hand, they are also able to alleviate these things and relieve humans of their negative effects. The goddess of fever, Febris had the ability to strike people with fever and to lift it. Thus she was prayed to when someone had fever. Angerona is the goddess of anxiety and fear. Like the function of Febris, she has the dual ability to instill people with anxiety and to remove it and give them peace of mind. She has a special annual festival, known as the *Angeronalia*.⁶⁵ Fames is the goddess of hunger, who has the ability to make people feel hungry and to sate their hunger. (This goddess has a Greek analogue in Limos.) Finally, Hegel mentions the goddess Robigo, who was worshipped by farmers, who invoked her to keep their crops safe from disease. She can both cause the blight and protect crops from it.⁶⁶

Hegel notes that it is no less strange to conceive of these kinds of things as divinities. He claims that these gods are so specific that they lay outside the *logos* of human reason; they cannot be explained by any higher principle: "It is hard to grasp that things of this kind were worshiped as divine. In such images every proper aspect of divinity is lost; it is only the feeling of dependence and fear that can turn them into something objective."⁶⁷ Instead, they reflect a view that is fully focused on the practical matters of daily life.⁶⁸

Hegel speaks of the Roman gods often being created in an ad hoc manner on some specific occasion of crisis. Thus the gods themselves have an ad hoc

⁶³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 214; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 119f. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 218; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 123.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 219; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 124. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 506; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 404. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 292; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 377. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 695; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 587.

⁶⁵ See Moritz, *ANΘΟΥΣΙΑ oder Roms Alterthümer*, pp. 253–4: "Die Sorgen und Bekümmernisse, welche das Gemüth beängstigen, personifizierte man sich zu einer Gottheit, welche Angerona hieß, und wie man glaubte die Mächte besaß, dergleichen Beängstigungen zu verursachen, und auch wiederum davon zu befreien, weswegen man sich mit Gebeten und Opfern an sie wandte, damit sie dergleichen Bekümmernisse des Gemüthes sowohl, als auch insbesondere eine körperliche Krankheit, welche Angina hieß, und einst bei dem römischen Volke epidemisch um sich griff, gnädig von den Bittenden abwenden möge."

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 109: "Um diese Zeit, wo in jenem Klima, der Rost oder Brand das Getreide am öftersten angreift wurde dem Robigo, einem Wesen der Einbildungskraft, das man sich selbst sowohl schadenstiftend als schadenverhütend dachte, ein Opfer dargebracht, um es zu versöhnen."

⁶⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 219; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 124.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 219f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 124.

character about them. This would seem to be a good explanation of these kinds of deities. When some affliction strikes, the normal Roman reaction was to determine which specific deity was responsible for it and then pray to that deity for help in alleviating the crisis. The Romans would promise to dedicate an altar or a temple to the deity responsible if it would come to their aid in a specific moment of need.⁶⁹ This also fits well with the Roman focus on exigency and practicality, which stands in contrast to the Greek disposition: “The introduction of the gods and most of the Roman temples thus arose from necessity—from a vow of some kind, and an obligatory, not disinterested acknowledgement of favors. The Greeks, on the contrary, erected and instituted their beautiful temples, and statues, and rites, from love of beauty and divinity for their own sake.”⁷⁰ The Romans did nothing “for its own sake,” but rather everything was done as a means towards a specific end. The existence of the gods was not something abstract but rather was to be found precisely in some concrete use.

10.5. THE ROMAN FORMS OF WORSHIP AND FESTIVALS

The important breakthrough in the Roman religion concerns the conception of the divinities as, in a sense, a response to human needs. Unlike the previous religions, where the individual did not count for much, here the needs of the individual suddenly take on great significance. Hegel notes, “God is served for the sake of a purpose, and this is a human purpose. The content does not begin, so to speak, with God—it is not the content of God’s nature—but instead it begins with humans, with what human purpose is.”⁷¹ This is a radical shift from most everything that was seen before. For example, in the religions of nature, the gods were externally given objects of nature, which were generally indifferent to human ends; humans counted for very little in this picture. In Judaism the whole plan for the universe came from the divine, and this was what was respected and cultivated. By contrast, with the Romans human goals and desires are given priority, even to a degree of triviality. In this sense the Roman gods assume the role of means for the realization of human ends. But this is a positive development in Hegel’s view since it shows an awareness of the importance of individuals with their specific goals and ends. These are here recognized as something valuable. This new conception of the divine has important implications for how these divinities are worshiped.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 215f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 121. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 509; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 407.

⁷⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 292; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 378.

⁷¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 696; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 588.

Since these gods are so closely associated with the ends that they are to bring about, there is little difference between them and their worship or cultivation. They have no abstract or theoretical element beyond their actual use. In the Roman religion it is all about the satisfaction of the needs of the individual worshiper. Here human beings have desires and goals, and they deify these as something external, but ultimately the point of departure is the human mind.

Hegel seizes on a passage from Cicero, where the orator hails the profound religiosity of the Romans: "The Romans were praised by Cicero for being the most pious nation, one that associates religion with everything it does. This, we can say, is in fact the case."⁷² Hegel seems to believe that this is due to the element of particularity that is at play here. Since the gods represent so many different particular needs, desires, etc. about daily life, they are regularly appealed to and play a constant role in Roman life. Since Roman society had become so complex, it was necessary to create numerous areas of specialization. These in turn gave rise to new gods who were responsible for their sphere of activity, however small that may be. Hegel continues, "Thus, in complete accord with the Roman spirit, Cicero derives religion from *religare*, for in fact religion in all its relationships was for the Roman spirit something that binds and commands."⁷³ According to the etymology, the verb "*religare*" means "to bind again" or "to rebind." The idea is that religion is something that is constantly playing a role in one's life, binding one to the divine.

Perhaps in part due to the influence of Moritz, Hegel is sensitive to the importance of religious festivals in the Roman religion. His claim is that it was by means of these festivals that religious belief became truly living for people: "When a religion has no doctrine it is particularly through the deity's portrayal in festivals and spectacles that his essentiality is presented in visible form to the community. In a religion of this kind, stage spectacles have a completely

⁷² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 696; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 588. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 508–9; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 406. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 696; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 588. The precise locus for this claim in Cicero is not entirely clear. See Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, p. 126, Book II.8: "If we compare ourselves with other peoples, in other respects we shall find that we are equal or even inferior; but in religion and the worship of gods we are pre-eminent." See also Cicero, *Respecting the Answers of the Soothsayers*: "Let us, O conscript fathers, think as highly of ourselves as we please; and yet it is not in numbers that we are superior to the Spaniards, nor in personal strength to the Gauls, nor in cunning to the Carthaginians, nor in arts to the Greeks, nor in the natural acuteness which seems to be implanted in the people of this land and country, to the Italian and Latin tribes; but it is in and by means of piety and religion, and this especial wisdom of perceiving that all things are governed and managed by the divine power of the immortal gods, that we have been and are superior to all other countries and nations." Quoted from *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, vol. 3, trans. by C.D. Yonge, London: George Bell and Sons 1875, p. 79 (Section 9).

⁷³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 697n; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 588n. See Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, pp. 152f., Book II.72. Hegel's attribution seems to be incorrect since here Cicero derives "*religio*" from "*relegare*," that is, "to reread" or "to go over again in reading, speech, or thought," and not from "*religare*." See also *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 433; *VPWG*, vol. 1, p. 402.

different importance from what they have for us.”⁷⁴ While we today think of drama as a purely secular cultural affair, for the ancient Greeks and Romans these were parts of religious festivals. The portrayal of the gods in these dramas was an essential aspect of the religion. For Hegel, this representation was something natural and beautiful among the Greeks, but when the Romans adopted this and tried to imitate it, they produced a poor copy. Hegel uses Seneca’s tragedies as examples of artificial constructions that portray essentially empty and lifeless gods. Since the Romans were so myopically occupied with finite goals and ends, they could not develop any higher principle as the Greeks did.

10.6. THE ROMAN GAMES

Hegel associates the religious festivals and dramas with the Roman games. He points out that the kinds of stories that the Romans enjoyed in their tragedies and comedies were of a rather base sort: the Romans “seized . . . on what is empty, ugly, and horrible, devoid of any ethical or godly idea, while in comedy they seized on the merely farcical, in the tradition of the Late Comedy given over entirely to private relationships, stories [or quarrels] between fathers and sons, and especially stories about prostitutes, slaves, and slave girls.”⁷⁵ Hegel presumably has in mind the early Roman dramatists Plautus and Terence. In these stories there was no higher ethical dimension present. From here it was, according to Hegel, only a short step to the games, which saw the brutal death of individuals for the entertainment of the audience: “The Romans took over not only Greek gods but also Greek games and spectacles. [But] one thing was distinctive in their case: the spectacles that consisted in nothing but the slaughter of animals and humans, the rivers of blood, mortal combats. Such spectacles mark the acme, so to speak, of what could be brought before their eyes.”⁷⁶

Since the Romans were so fixed on the actual and empirical existence with its specific tasks and challenges, they were lacking a higher spiritual principle (with the exception of that of sovereignty). They were thus not interested in plays or dramas that articulated or portrayed such principles, for example, ethical dilemmas like those treated in the Greek tragedies. Instead, their focus was on the theater of real life. Thus they were more attracted to dilemmas of real individuals. There was nothing abstract or theoretical about this. It was

⁷⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 510; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 407.

⁷⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 221; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 126.

⁷⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 510; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 408. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 221f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 126f. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 697; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 589. *LPWH*, vol. 1, p. 435; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 404f.

here that the games with life and death struggles had their appeal to them. For the Romans:

There is no ethical interest, no tragic reversal and upheaval that would have for its content an ethical interest or a misfortune that might be connected with ethical characteristics; instead the picture is that of the dry, cold conversion of death. Hundreds and thousands had to slay one another. This cold-blooded murder was a delight to their eyes; in it they beheld the nullity of human individuality, the worthlessness of the individual (because individuality has no ethical life within it).⁷⁷

The Romans delighted in the brutal excitement of the moment and were unconcerned about the lack of any higher spiritual point or principle.

The brutality of the games clearly exposes the contradiction in the Roman view. The individuals who are forced to fight and die in the games have no value whatsoever as individuals. They are the subjects of a supreme will, that of the emperor or ruler, which is the highest principle. But this principle is empty and thus arbitrary in its exercise:

What is brought before the spectators' eyes here is essentially the process of a death devoid of spirit, a murder game, willed by irrational caprice, serving only to give them something to feast their eyes on. This is a necessity that is mere caprice, murder without content, or having only itself for content. This and the envisagement of fate are the acme of experience, to die imperturbably through an empty caprice.⁷⁸

Despite the existence of Roman law, certain groups of people such as criminals, captured prisoners of war, or slaves were excluded from its protection. These were the people who ended up in the arena. This is, in Hegel's eyes, an obvious contradiction. Although Rome regards itself as a *Rechtsstaat* and prides itself on the enormous apparatus of Roman law, this law is not universal, and there are key exceptions that undermine the legitimacy of the entire system.

But strangely, while the lives of these individuals are not held to be of any value or worth, nonetheless there is a life of subjectivity and subjective interests that is recognized. The emperor represents the universal that excludes and destroys the particular. This is a clear form of alienation for Hegel. Both the universal and the particular exist, but they are largely independent of one another. The universal end, sovereignty or domination of the world, in some way includes all individuals but at the same time is utterly indifferent to specific people.

⁷⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 697f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 589.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 510; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 408. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 222; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 127. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 698; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 589–90.

10.7. ABSTRACT CITIZENSHIP

One key feature of Roman civilization, according to Hegel, was the development of Roman law. This marked an important step in the forward march of human freedom with its recognition of certain rights for individuals. The Romans developed the legal concept of a “person,”⁷⁹ which is invested with specific rights and obligations and enjoys the protection of the law. This is the notion of citizenship, which Hegel refers to as “legal status” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁸⁰ In other words, only citizens were granted the protection of the law and could enjoy the benefits of Roman society. For example, only citizens could own property, which was, for Hegel, an important aspect of personal freedom.⁸¹ For this reason Roman citizenship was a much desired status, which the Romans effectively used as a political tool. After they conquered foreign peoples, instead of leaving them in a defeated and humiliated position, the Romans allowed them, usually after a period of time and under the right conditions, to become Roman citizens and made the conquered town or district a part of a Roman province. This proved a profoundly effective foreign policy since it often offered the defeated peoples a better life under Roman rule than they had previously enjoyed.

This was, however, a mixed blessing. While Rome developed a legal system that was suitable for its enormous empire, its size made it impossible to have anything even close to Greek *Sittlichkeit* or any commonality of culture, ethics, or tradition.⁸² Rome was a multinational empire with many different languages, religious traditions, and customs. It did not have any sense of the close-knit ethical community that was found in the Greek city-states. The Roman conception of citizenship or legal status necessarily had to abstract from the specific individual in the specific context to make any sense. A Roman citizen could be someone in Britain, in Asia Minor, or in North Africa, and the concept needed to cover them all. Thus, the concept of the citizen was something abstract:

This infinitude of subjectivity as such can be expressed more precisely as personality, the category into which a human being enters as a person in the realm of right. As a person a human being owns property, has the right of possession. It is the person who enjoys recognition as such, but only the abstract person, the abstractly juridical person capable of ownership. It goes no further than that.⁸³

⁷⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 317; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 407f. *PR*, § 36; *Jub.*, vol. 7, pp. 90f. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 511–12; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 409. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 698f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 590.

⁸⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 290–4; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 367–72. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 229; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 134.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 316–17; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 407. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 279; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 362. *PhS*, p. 292; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 370.

⁸² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 295; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 381.

⁸³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 511f.; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 410.

Hegel's critical point here is that the notion of the individual as the purely legal concept is a reduction that does not do justice to the full extent of human selfhood and social and ethical relations. The individual is reduced to an "empty unit"⁸⁴ or a "self-sustaining atom."⁸⁵ Although this is an important first step, there is more to human freedom than simply having the legal status of a citizen and having the right to own property.

While there was a legal system in place to ensure that people had some minimal protection under the law, there was no guarantee that there was any corresponding ethical sense of obligation towards one's fellow citizens. Hegel refers to the citizens in the Roman Empire as isolated points or atoms with no coherent ethical unity to connect them.⁸⁶ Hegel explains:

There are higher rights than this: human conscience has its right, and a right much higher still is that of ethics or morality. But these higher rights are no longer present here in their concrete and proper sense, for the abstract right of the person prevails here instead, a right that consists in the determinations of property alone. It is personality, to be sure, that maintains this exalted position, but only abstract personality, only subjectivity in this abstract sense.⁸⁷

Hegel is often criticized for failing to recognize the importance of the individual conscience or for dissolving it in an absolute state. But from this passage it is clear that he in fact ranks the individual and conscience higher than the law in a certain sense. The sphere of ethics is superior to that of jurisprudence. The key to understanding this is to realize that Hegel's conception of conscience is not that of the isolated individual who simply does whatever he wants in contradiction of the universal. Rather, the true conception of conscience, according to his view, obliges one to act in accordance with the universal and not one's own subjective drives, desires, and impulses.

In any case, while the idea of Roman citizenship or legal status played an important role in the daily life of Romans, it did not ultimately protect them from the crimes and excesses of the emperor, who was for all intents and purposes above the law. He could commit crimes against Roman citizens or anyone else with complete impunity.⁸⁸ This undermined the entire system of Roman law and led to a sense of alienation from the emperor and the state. Despite their important accomplishments in the realm of law, the Romans never managed to attain a conception of selfhood that is absolute, infinite, and irreducible.

⁸⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 291; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 369. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 281, p. 288; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 365, p. 373.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 512; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 410.

⁸⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 289; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 367. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 317; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 407.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 699; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 590.

⁸⁸ See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 224; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 129.

10.8. THE TRANSITION TO CHRISTIANITY

Hegel emphasizes the importance of the Roman religion as a transition to Christianity.⁸⁹ As has been noted, according to Hegel's speculative logic, the movement of religious thought is a three-step process that involves first beginning with a universal, then distinguishing this universal from a particular, and finally reuniting the particular with the universal; or, put differently, it is the initial positing of the divine, then the negation of it, and finally the negation of the negation. It is the Christian Trinity which best embodies this movement, according to Hegel, and so the previous religions are judged by means of this criterion.

The significance of the Roman religion was, among other things, its raising of the importance of the individual or particular. The Romans believed that their gods should not be abstract, transcendent entities but rather should exist in the daily life of individuals. This represents the second stage of the religious development, namely, that the universal divinity comes down from the transcendent sphere and becomes particular. Now what is lacking is the return of this subjectivity back to the universal, that is, the third step. With the Romans, the individual is radically separated from the universal (sovereignty or the emperor), and herein consists the contradiction. The true speculative conception is when the first and the second stages are united with one another, when the particular returns to the universal or reflects the universal. It is the third stage that is lacking; the negation of the negation.

Rome's contribution to the development of religion is to be found in the recognition of subjectivity in individuals. The divine presents itself in the realm of actuality as a reflection of a specific concrete element of the subjectivity of human beings. So also individuals and their goals and needs have an infinite significance. The Romans were the first to recognize the infinite value of the subjectivity of the individual. In the previous religions there was of course a conception of subjectivity, but this was always limited in some way. In Judaism it was the divine plan that was the absolute end and not the goals and desires of the individuals. So also in the Greek conception the gods had many different plans and goals, but those of the specific individuals were not regarded as decisive; moreover, the Greeks had a conception of fate that hung over individuals and their ends. The Roman religion, by contrast, with its emphasis on the practical elevates the ends of the individual to an infinite degree. They are regarded as something divine. First, for the religions of nature, which understood the divine to be a thing or an object of nature (the God of substantiality), there was no sense of the importance and value of a

⁸⁹ See also *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 226–31; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 130–7. *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 511f.; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 408–10. *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 699; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 591.

subject. Second for the religions of spirit (subjectivity), there was a sense of the value of human beings, but the goals of the divine were always limited, as specific ends (in Judaism and Greek polytheism). Now in the Roman world a new religion arises, Christianity, which realizes for the first time the infinite, irreducible value of each and every human being. Humans are valuable in themselves and are thus ends in themselves. The inwardness and subjectivity of each person is regarded as something divine. Thus a part of God dwells in everyone.

The defect with this conception in the Roman world can be found in the emperor. The emperor represents the universal, sovereignty, but this is incarnated in a particular individual. According to Hegel, the universal is ultimately abstract and empty, and thus it needs to be filled with content if it is to act in the real world. This content is then supplied by the particular individual. This leads to arbitrariness. The emperor can do great works of good or commit the worst atrocities. His absolute power means that there is no limit to either side of the spectrum. In this view there is no general conception of ethics or law or anything else that is regarded as having absolute value since the emperor can overrule it and defy it at any time. Everything is reduced to fulfilling the base desires of the emperor at his whim. This means "the complete disappearance of all beautiful, ethical organic life, and the crumbling into momentary enjoyment and pleasure, a human animal kingdom [from which] all higher elements have been abstracted."⁹⁰ The emperor has the power of life and death over everyone; he can send hundreds to their deaths in the games for no reason beyond the satisfaction of his own desire. This absolute power is that of the divine. The arbitrariness of the emperor's acts demonstrates that the particular is disconnected from the universal.

The Roman world thus ends with a great contradiction between universal and particular that is in need of reconciliation. Stoicism attempts a reconciliation of this contradiction by retreating to the realm of thought.⁹¹ In thought one can be free, even though one's freedom in the actual world is limited by that of the despotic emperor. But this is not satisfactory since this makes virtue something for thought alone that has no real place in the external world. In this sense freedom only exists in the mind of the subject alone and cannot be actualized. What is required is for this aspect of particularity to be reunited with the universal. The universal must be posited in the real world, but yet that incarnation must likewise correspond to the universal or be reunited with it.

The Romans represent an important step beyond the Greeks due to their political development. Greek thinking remained ultimately national, focused on their own individual city-state. This gave them only a limited concept of

⁹⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 229; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 133f.

⁹¹ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 119–22; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 160–2.

what it was to be a subject. The Romans, by contrast, had a vast multinational empire. It included many different peoples with different customs and languages. This empire offered all of its members the right of citizenship. With this move they progressed to a universal conception of what it is to be a human being. But the Roman conception of citizenship, while universal, does not do complete justice to the individual. There still remain important aspects of the individual that are not free even as a Roman citizen. The Roman state is the power that destroys individual states and individual local deities.

What is required is for the particular to return to the universal or to be genuinely reflected in it. But according to Hegel this cannot take place here. Instead, what is required is that the Roman principle with its focus on particularity be brought together with the Jewish principle of the abstract divine or the One. This is what happens historically when Rome conquers Judea and makes it a Roman province. Here Roman ideas come together with traditional Jewish religion, and something new emerges:

The Oriental principle of pure abstraction [had to] be combined with the finitude of the West, [so this people is] geographically in between two regions, in the land of Israel. It was, [as we] have said, in the Jewish people that God took this [Oriental] principle upon himself as the age-old grief of the world; for here we find the religion of abstract suffering, of the *one* Lord, against whom and despite whom the actuality of life stands its ground as the infinite willfulness of self-consciousness, and all that is abstract is bound together.⁹²

What Hegel refers to here as “abstract suffering” is what he in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* calls “the unhappy consciousness.”⁹³ This is the view where the individual is painfully separated from the divine and is thus alienated from the world. This alienation is also a dominant element in the Roman world. Now these two worldviews come together to produce the next step, the highest step—Christianity, which will overcome the alienation and liberate humans with a new conception of freedom. In Christianity the actuality of the divine as spirit corresponds fully to the concept of the divine.

Hegel explains, “The age-old curse is undone, it had been met by salvation, in that finitude has for its part validated its claim to be both positivity and *infinite finitude*.”⁹⁴ The curse of the original sin created a split between God and human beings. All truth and validity lay on the side of the divine and the infinite. By contrast, the human world of finitude and sin had, by comparison, no value. This led to the alienation that one finds widespread in the Roman world at the time of the birth of Christianity. But the Romans helped

⁹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 231; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 136f.

⁹³ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 126–38; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 167–81.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 231; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 137. See also *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 512; *VPR*, Part 2, pp. 409f.

to pave the way to overcoming the original sin by showing the importance of human actions and ends. They showed that these things could also be valuable in themselves and were not always arbitrary and insubstantial. This showed the link between humans and the divine. In this way individuals “must also be taken in a higher sense, where the personality of the subject pertains to the idea rather than merely being a person immediately.”⁹⁵ When humans acted in ways that were in line with the universal, their finite act showed the sign of the divine, of infinity. The particular was not just an arbitrary particular, but it could also be a part of the universal. This then led to the overcoming of alienation in the Christian religion.

⁹⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 512; *VPR*, Part 2, p. 409.

Christianity

The Absolute or Revealed Religion

In his comments about his approach and methodology at the beginning of his lectures Hegel explains his procedure and organization of the material. As noted above,¹ he states that first he will treat the universal, that is, the concept of religion. Then he will treat the particular, that is, all of the concrete world religions and their conceptions of the divine. With the end of the analysis of the Roman religion Hegel concludes his account of determinate religion, which represented the minor premise in the large analysis of his lectures. Now he moves on to Christianity, which represents the conclusion of the syllogism. With Christianity the universal is united with the particular and the true and correct concept of religion is finally attained. The *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* thus culminate in Christianity, which he dubs “The Absolute Religion” or alternatively “The Consummate Religion.”²

Hegel, of course, had extensive training in theology and knew the Bible in both Hebrew and Greek. He treats different aspects of early Christianity in “The Life of Jesus,” “The Positivity of the Christian Religion,” and “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate.”³ He also dedicates a section to Christianity in the “Religion” chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁴ Although this analysis is somewhat perfunctory, one can see in it the preliminary outline of his later analysis in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Likewise in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* a brief section is dedicated to Christianity,⁵ which is the only religion treated at any length in the work. Hegel also offers

¹ See Chapter 1, section 1.2. above.

² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 61–347; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 1–270. *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 327–58, vol. 3, pp. 1–151; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 191–356. *AR*, pp. 3–232.

³ “The Life of Jesus” (*TJ*, pp. 73–136; *TE*, pp. 104–65), “The Positivity of the Christian Religion” (*TJ*, pp. 137–240; *ETW*, pp. 67–181), “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate” (*TJ*, pp. 241–342; *ETW*, pp. 182–301).

⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 453–78; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 569–601.

⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, §§ 564–71; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 453–8.

a discussion of it in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.⁶ The role of Christianity in the development of art is treated in numerous places in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*. The Introduction to the third volume of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* also contains a useful analysis of Christianity in the context of the history of ideas.⁷ It should be noted that in his *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, he also frequently refers to different aspects of Christianity.⁸

It is probably meaningless to begin to identify all of Hegel's sources of information about Christianity since this would be a very extensive list. From his studies in theology, he was familiar with the then current works in Biblical studies. Moreover, he knew the works of the Church fathers. In addition, he refers directly to several philosophers who have made important contributions to the philosophy of religion such as Philo, Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, and Fichte. He also refers indirectly to the works of the Enlightenment, which are critical of Christianity and religion generally. It is probably safe to say that Christianity was so central for him that it could not be separated from the philosophy of religion in general.

11.1. INTRODUCTION: HEGEL'S DIFFERENT DESIGNATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

Hegel declares that "the realized concept of religion" has now finally been reached.⁹ He recalls that religion was defined at the beginning as the study of the development of the different forms of the divine. The true concept of the divine was God as a self-conscious agent, as spirit. This is what has been attained here. Self-consciousness means the ability to see oneself by means of another, to see oneself in another. In Christianity, "God is self-consciousness; he knows himself in a consciousness that is distinct from him."¹⁰ The key to understanding this in a Christian context is found in the doctrine of the Revelation. The universal, infinite God reveals himself to humanity as a particular, finite person: "We define God when we say that he distinguishes

⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 318–36; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 409–30. *LPWH*, vol. 1, pp. 447–60; *VPWG*, vol. 1, pp. 419–38. *GRW*, pp. 720–48.

⁷ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 3, pp. 1–25; *Jub.*, vol. 19, pp. 99–120. *LHP*, vol. 3, pp. 17–35; *VGP*, vol. 3, pp. 1–16.

⁸ See *Vorlesungen über die Beweise Daseyn Gottes und Zum kosmologischen Gottesbeweis*, ed. by Walter Jaeschke, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 18, *Vorlesungsmanuskripte II (1816–1831)*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1995. *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, ed. and trans. by Peter C. Hodgson, Oxford: Clarendon Press 2007.

⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 249n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 177n.

¹⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 250n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 177n.

himself from himself and is an object for himself but that in this distinction he is purely identical with himself—that he is *spirit*.¹¹ Since human beings are also characterized as being self-conscious spirit, they can relate to God as self-conscious. God's self-consciousness and human self-consciousness are thus mutually determined. Hegel explains, "Finite consciousness knows God only to the extent to which God knows himself in it; thus God is spirit, indeed the Spirit of his community, i.e., of those who worship him."¹² The idea of the spirit of God in the community of believers is of course what is known as the Holy Spirit, the third part of the Trinity. So here at the start it is clear that Hegel will focus primarily on two key dogmas, which he takes to be essential to Christianity: the Revelation and the Trinity. The correct understanding of these dogmas holds the key to grasping why Christianity is to be regarded as the culmination of the concept of the divine and religious thinking in general.

Hegel begins with a general characterization of Christianity, which involves three parts: Christianity as the revealed religion, as a positive religion, and as a religion of truth and freedom. (1) Hegel begins his account of Christianity by defining it as "the revealed religion." The Deists conceived of the divine as something abstract and transcendent, and God was thought to dwell in a distant realm beyond anything that humans could grasp. But the Christian doctrine of the Revelation contradicts this view. God revealed Himself and thus made Himself known. This means that God is not a transcendent entity but instead stands in a relation to human beings. He too occupies the human sphere. This is the element of Christianity that Hegel wants to underscore when he talks about the revealed religion. But there have been other forms of revelation in other religions, and so it might seem that there is nothing particularly special about the Christian Revelation. But these other forms of religion have, according to Hegel, a less developed notion of the divine. Religious believers have a relation to or consciousness of the absolute essence, that is, the divine. But this can be conceived in different ways. When this absolute essence is conceived in terms of an object of nature or an animal, then this is not truly absolute since one can conceive of something higher, namely, self-consciousness. Then in the religion of spirit, God is conceived as a self-conscious entity, but the forms of self-consciousness that appear in Judaism and the Greek and Roman religions are still not adequate. Only in Christianity is the adequate form of spirit revealed as spirit.

Hegel rebukes the contemporary Romantic movement when he mentions "the standpoint of the age," which he critically characterizes as holding the following view: "We cannot know God as object, we cannot cognize him, and it is the subjective attitude that is important."¹³ But despite his criticism, Hegel

¹¹ Ibid. ¹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 250n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 178n.

¹³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 166; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 101.

nonetheless regards this as “a very important advance” in the development of religion.¹⁴ This modern Romantic conception “has validated an infinite moment; for it involves the recognition of the consciousness of subjectivity as an absolute moment.”¹⁵ All of the previous religions, in one way or another, undermined or marginalized the importance of the individual. Only in the modern world has this been fully recognized, and this recognition began in Christianity.

Since outward reconciliation is ruled out, the modern Romantic conception seeks reconciliation with God by retreating into its own inwardness and subjectivity. Christianity overcomes this separation. In Christianity the believer has eliminated the sense of separation, and God is no longer conceived as something distant or alien.¹⁶ Christianity is the religion of reconciliation, but the form of reconciliation that one finds in Romanticism is inadequate since it is purely subjective. Hegel compares Romanticism with the view of Stoicism and what he, in the *Phenomenology*, calls “the unhappy consciousness” in the Roman world.¹⁷ As we saw in Chapter 10, this is the view that is wholly alienated from a corrupt and sinful world. It yearns for the truth in the realm of reason or the divine, but this is nowhere to be found in the real world. So the individual retreats to the peace of his or her own mind and finds it there. But in both these cases from the ancient world and modern Romanticism the reconciliation is incomplete since the alienation with the world is still very much present. It cannot be overcome with pure thought alone. The unhappy consciousness is characterized by its eternal longing to attain God, which it can never achieve so long as it is rooted in the corrupt, sinful, and finite mundane world.

The adequate conception of God is a divinity fully revealed and thus in contact with human beings. Hegel claims, “A spirit that is not revelatory is not spirit.”¹⁸ This is the pendant in religion to Hegel’s claim in the *Phenomenology*, “A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness.”¹⁹ For God to be God, He must be recognized as god by self-conscious agents. Thus it is a mistake to think that the revelation is something that might or might not have happened. Instead, the revelation belongs to the very notion of God, and spirit means to reveal or manifest itself for another.²⁰ Here it becomes clear why Hegel takes the characterization of Christianity as the revealed religion to be so important. The true conception of God as self-conscious is synonymous with God revealing Himself to human beings.

(2) Hegel then explains his understanding of Christianity as a “positive religion.”²¹ By this he means it is something that “has come to humanity from

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 167; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 102f.

¹⁷ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 126–38; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 167–81.

¹⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 170; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 105.

¹⁹ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 110; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 147.

²⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 170; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 105.

²¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 251–62; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 179–89.

without, has been given to it.”²² Christianity has a history and a set of dogmas that we learn about after the fact, but which we do not produce. In this sense it is something outside of and different from us. Hegel draws an analogy from the sphere of political philosophy:

Laws—e.g., civil laws, laws of the state—are likewise something positive: they come to us and are there for us as valid. They are not merely something external for us, as are sensible objects, so that we can leave them behind or pass them by; rather, in their externality, they also ought to have, for us subjectively, an essential, subjectively binding power.²³

In some cultures this positive law can appear as something oppressive since it is not rational or just but rather imposed by a tyrant. In this case it is positive in the sense that it comes from the outside and is imposed on us, but this indicates a stage that is not fully developed. The modern view is that the consent of the individual is also an essential feature of positive law. One can grasp the rationality of the law or the religious doctrine and then assent to it of one’s own free will without coercion. Hegel gives the following example:

When we grasp or recognize the law, when we find it rational that crime should be punished, this is not because law is positive but rather because it has an essential status for us. It is not simply valid for us externally because it *is* so; rather it is also valid for us internally, it is rationally valid as something essential, because it also is itself internal and rational.²⁴

So although a law or a religious dogma is initially positive, coming from the outside, and we must learn about it when we are young, nonetheless we can give our consent to such laws and doctrines when we grow older and can see their truth with our rationality. So both an outward, external element and an inward element are involved.

Laws are not true simply because a king or government issues them. There are many cases of irrational laws and regulations. But simply because something comes from the outside does not mean that it is irrational or tyrannical. On the contrary, it is an important element in human freedom to be able to see the rationality of certain things that come from the outside and assent to them. To be subjectively free beings, we must exercise our ability to understand and go along with the just laws and reject the unjust ones. So also with religion we are obliged to understand and assent to the positive doctrines of a given faith: “Religion also appears as positive in the entire account of its doctrines. But it should not remain in this form; it should not be a matter of mere

²² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 252; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 179.

²³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 252f.; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 180.

²⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 253; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 180.

representation or of bare remembrance.”²⁵ A religion that demands absolute, unwavering, unthinking obedience to a law or a doctrine does not recognize the subjective freedom of the individual.

(3) Hegel finally explains Christianity in terms of truth and freedom.²⁶ For him, this means the same thing. The long story of the history of the world's religions that we have been following has featured different conceptions of human beings. In all of these views humans were never entirely free since they were subject to the forces of nature, to fate, or to a tyrannical emperor. Only when humans are fully free can this development be said to be complete. But for humans, as self-conscious agents, to be free, they must be recognized as free by their god. This was not the case in the previous religions, but in Christianity it happens for the first time that the infinite and absolute value of each individual is recognized. The divine in each human being is something special and unique in every person. Only the Christian God recognizes this. For this reason Christianity “is the religion of freedom.”²⁷ There is thus a dialectic of recognition, whereby God, as spirit, recognizes humans, as spirit, as free, and humans likewise recognize God as free spirit.

For this to happen the initial alienation from nature and the world must be overcome. Hegel explains:

Reconciliation begins with differentiated entities standing opposed to each other—God, who confronts a world that is estranged from him, and a world that is estranged from its existence. [They are] in conflict with one another, and [they are] external to one another. Reconciliation is the negation of this separation, this division, and means that each cognizes itself in the other, finds itself in its essence.²⁸

This is “a universal process” that Hegel has been tracing in his account of the history of the world's religions.²⁹ In the previous religions humans were always separated or alienated from the divine and, accordingly, from the world. The gods were always something other or different; nature was something frightening and threatening. Only with Christianity, when God becomes man is the reconciliation possible.

This relation of harmony with the other is what Hegel characterizes as “truth.” He explains, “For ‘truth’ means that in what is objective we are not relating to something alien. ‘Freedom’ expresses the very thing that truth is, but with a logical character of negation.”³⁰ So the three terms—truth, freedom,

²⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 254; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 181.

²⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 171f.; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 106f.

²⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 171; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 106.

²⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 171f.; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 107.

²⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 172; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 107.

³⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 171; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 106.

and reconciliation—are all intimately connected. The truth of human beings is their freedom, but this implies reconciliation from a previous state of alienation.

Hegel explains the general structure of his organization of the lectures in terms of these categories. First, he associates the religions of nature with consciousness.³¹ As we know from the analysis of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, consciousness is the relation of the human mind to objects. So in the sphere of religion, this means that the divine is conceived as an object of nature. Then he associates the religions of spirit with self-consciousness.³² But since in the religions of spirit, Judaism, and Greek and Roman polytheism, human beings were still conceived as finite entities (both by themselves and by their gods), full freedom was never achieved. Christianity brings this development to a conclusion by introducing true freedom.³³ Christianity thus brings together all of the previous forms of religion and overcomes their shortcomings. Here it is evident that Hegel's long analysis of the world's religions was not just a *pro forma* exercise. On the contrary, the point was to demonstrate the development of the conception of the divine and the parallel development of human freedom as it occurred in the religions of the world. This then all plays an essential role in his understanding of Christianity as the culmination of the development of religion, that is, as the religion of truth and freedom. Without the foregoing analyses of the other religions, the whole point of the importance of Christianity would be missed. Moreover, the key to the importance of Christianity is something that concerns specifically its content, for it is content which distinguishes it from other religions. Thus Hegel concludes his general characterization of Christianity that precedes his actual analysis.

11.2. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ANALYSIS

Hegel then presents the organization of his analysis of Christianity.³⁴ Although he does not begin by stating this explicitly, of particular importance is his account of the Christian Trinity. In this doctrine, he claims, one finds the profound truth of all speculative thinking. The Trinity is to religion what the Concept is to philosophy. For Hegel, the Trinity is the key doctrine of the Christian religion.³⁵

³¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 173; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 108: "First we had *nature religion*, i.e., religion from the standpoint of *consciousness* alone."

³² *Ibid.*: "The second form was that of *spiritual religion*, but it was the religion of the spirit that remains finitely determined; to this extent it is the religion of *self-consciousness*."

³³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 173; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 108.

³⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 271–4; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 196–9.

³⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 1, pp. 126f.; *VPR*, Part 1, p. 43.

Since religion is a kind of knowing, it follows the same structural form as the different kinds of knowing in other fields. As we know from Hegel's metaphysics, the Concept (*Begriff*) constitutes the basic structure of the world and the human mind. The Concept consists of the dialectical movement from universality (*Allgemeinheit*) to particularity (*Besonderheit*) and then to their unity in individuality (*Einzelheit*).³⁶ This is the basic structure of all human thinking and thus of the different conceptions of the divine as well. While other religions capture this truth only partially or inadequately, Christianity fulfills and completes it. It is by virtue of this doctrine that Christianity is continuous with speculative philosophy and philosophical knowing. In the Christian Trinity, the metaphysical Concept is embodied in one of its highest forms. Hegel writes in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*:

the Absolute Spirit exhibits itself (α) as eternal content, abiding self-centered, even in its manifestation; (β) as distinction of the eternal essence from its manifestation, which by this difference becomes the phenomenal world into which the content enters; (γ) as infinite return, and reconciliation with the eternal being, of the world it gave away—the withdrawal of the eternal from the phenomenal into the unity of its fullness.³⁷

The *universal* aspect represents God the Father, dwelling in the beyond. Then this universality must become *particular* and enter into actuality with Christ, the Son. Finally, with the death of the particular, the Son is reunited with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. In this key Christian doctrine, when understood conceptually, one thus finds the necessary features of the metaphysical Concept.

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel characterizes this as follows: "God in his eternity before the creation of the world, and outside the world."³⁸ This is the conception of God existing on his own with nothing else. This is the stage of unity. The second stage is the creation of the world, where God creates the universe and distinguishes something from himself.³⁹ This is the stage of alienation or division. Finally, the third step is that of reconciliation, where the separation is overcome: "through this process of reconciliation, spirit has reconciled with itself what it distinguished from itself in its act of diremption, of primal division, and thus it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit [present] in its community."⁴⁰ With the reference to the Holy Spirit we get the first hint at the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Hegel. As is clear here, the

³⁶ Hegel, *EL*, § 163; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 358–61.

³⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 566; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 455. See *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 186; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 120. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 271–4; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 196–9.

³⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 273; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 198.

³⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 273f.; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 198f.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 274; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 199.

structure of his analysis follows the three persons of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The importance of the Trinity can be seen clearly in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where Hegel defines his key term “spirit” in terms of the Trinitarian structure:

But what is spirit? It is the one immutably homogeneous infinite—pure identity—which in its second phase separates itself from itself and makes this second aspect its own polar opposite, viz. as existence for and in self as contrasted with the universal. But this separation is annulled by the fact that atomistic subjectivity, as simple relation to itself [as occupied with self alone] is itself the universal, the identical with self . . . [Spirit] is recognized as *Triune*: the “Father” and the “Son” and that duality which essentially characterizes it as “Spirit.”⁴¹

It lies in the very nature of spirit to display the movement that we see in the Christian Trinity. Humans have within themselves both a universal and a particular aspect that is constantly in interaction.

11.3. UNIVERSALITY: THE REALM OF THE FATHER

Hegel begins his analysis with the conception of God as universality, that is, the first person of the Trinity, God the Father.⁴² God is initially conceived as an abstract idea or other in the beyond. The human mind abstracts from itself and conceives of God as an other in opposition to itself. Hegel describes this as follows in the *Encyclopedia*:

Under the “moment” of *Universality*—the sphere of pure thought or the abstract medium of essence—it is therefore the Absolute Spirit, which is at first the presupposed principle, not, however, staying aloof and inert, but (as underlying and essential power under the reflective category of causality) creator of heaven and earth.⁴³

This conception of God is entirely abstract; the divine is merely conceived as a self-conscious other that dwells in the beyond. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, this appears as follows: “In accord with the first element, then, we consider God in his eternal idea, as he is in and for himself, prior to or apart from the creation of the world, so to speak. Insofar as he is thus within himself, it is a matter of the eternal idea, which is not yet posited in its reality but is

⁴¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 323f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 415f. See also *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 319; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 410. “God is thus recognized as *Spirit*, only when known as the *Triune*.”

⁴² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 189–98; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 122–31. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 275–90; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 199–215. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 363–4; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 281–2. *PhS*, pp. 466–9; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 586–90.

⁴³ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 567; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 455.

itself still only the abstract idea.”⁴⁴ For something to be posited in reality it must be more than mere thought, but must also appear as an object of sense. But here God, prior to the creation, is just an object of thought but not perception. He is not yet revealed or made concrete in any way. Seen historically, this stage corresponds to Judaism.⁴⁵

According to Hegel's view, this purely universal conception cannot remain abstract and static for long. It is the nature of the Concept to develop and to be a part of a dynamic process. What is abstract needs to become concrete: “Spirit . . . is the living process by which the *implicit* unity of divine and human nature becomes *explicit*, or is brought forth.”⁴⁶ The universal seeks to determine itself and make itself particular. Since the initial idea of God is that of a spirit “prior to or apart from the creation of the world,”⁴⁷ God is indeterminate since there is no other by means of which He can distinguish Himself. He dwells, as it were, in a universe with only one object. For this reason He remains abstract. Thus, His first attempt to externalize and particularize Himself is in the act of creation. By creating the world, God creates an other to Himself. But this distinction does not adequately reflect and thus determine the nature of God.⁴⁸ The problem is that God is Spirit, but Spirit is not reflected in the world that He created. Thus in the dialectic of recognition and mutual determination, God stands opposite a thing and not another Spirit. Another form of externalization and particularization is required for God to be genuinely determined as Spirit.

For anything to be a determinate being, it must be distinguished from other things. God must have some opposing term to be determinate. It is therefore no accident that God's first act is the creation of the universe. With the existence of the universe there is an opposing term that is distinguished from God. Put differently, God is determined in opposition to the universe. In Genesis this is told as a story about how God creates the world and the different things that inhabit it. This is the way the common believer understands the creation, that is, in terms of picture thinking. But Hegel notes that this is just a different way of understanding the deeper philosophical idea that the universal must make itself concrete and determinate.⁴⁹ The world of particulars thus stands in opposition to the universal conception of the divine.

But since God is spirit, the opposition of mere things or the universe is not sufficient for His determination as spirit. As has been seen, for self-conscious beings, or spirit, they must distinguish themselves from other self-conscious

⁴⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 275; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 199f.

⁴⁵ But it should be noted that this could be conceived as somewhat problematic given that the God of the Hebrew Bible does in fact at times become quite particular or personal in His interactions with specific people.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 67; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 275; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 199f.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 279; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 204.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 467; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 587.

beings. Hegel writes, "Spirit is the knowledge of oneself in the externalization of oneself; the being that is the movement of retaining its self-identity in its otherness."⁵⁰ To be spirit, God must have as His other, self-conscious agents. Thus, the creation of human beings is a necessary part of the determination of the divine. But the first relation of God with human beings is also inadequate. The first human beings, Adam and Eve, lived in immediate harmony with nature. They were not fully self-conscious agents; like the animals, they did not know that they were naked. It is only when they sin and come to know the difference between good and evil that they become fully human. With this knowledge they become like God, fully spirit. As a result, the opposing term to God is human beings as sinful individuals.

But this conception of human beings is still inadequate to be an other for God. God's true other must be divine as well. Human beings must be thought of not as hopeless sinners but rather as possessing something divine in themselves. With the doctrine of the Revelation and the Incarnation of Christ, God becomes incarnate himself. Now there is an opposite between the abstract God, the Father and the concrete God the Son. This is an adequate reflection of spirit and determination of the divine.⁵¹ Hegel's point here is that the Incarnation is not an arbitrary or chance event; rather, it was necessary for God to be who he is, that is, spirit. God would not be spirit unless he had this relation to another spirit. For the ordinary believer whose understanding of the world is based on the senses, the idea of God becoming human is a mystery that cannot be grasped.⁵² But for the person who understands philosophy and speculative thinking, the necessary logic behind it is evident. Similarly, the very designations of the Father and the Son come from ordinary experience, but they have a deeper philosophical meaning.⁵³ This leads to Hegel's analysis of the second person of the Trinity, the Son.

11.4. PARTICULARITY: THE REALM OF THE SON

The second step in the account is the second person of the Trinity, that is, God considered as Particularity: the Son.⁵⁴ Hegel's analysis here is divided into two

⁵⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 459; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 577. See also *PhS*, p. 463; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 582.

⁵¹ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 470; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 590: "That which in the pure thought of Spirit is in general merely hinted at as the *othering* of the divine being, here comes nearer to its realization for picture-thinking: this realization consists for picture-thinking in the self-abasement of the divine being who renounces his abstract and non-actual nature."

⁵² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 282f.; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 207f.

⁵³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 194; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 127f.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 198–223; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 131–54. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 290–328; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 215–51. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 365–71; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 282–7. *PhS*, pp. 469–71; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 590–2.

large parts: the first concerns the differentiation or division of God,⁵⁵ and the second concerns the reconciliation.⁵⁶

11.4.1. Differentiation: The Creation

When one takes the first stage, God the Father, or God as an abstract idea, as the point of departure, the development to the second stage can be seen from two different perspectives: from the side of the subject and from the side of this idea itself. With respect to the first perspective, Hegel explains, "The subject behaves in general as a thinking subject, thinking this idea; yet the subject is also concrete consciousness. The idea must therefore be [present] for this subject as concrete self-consciousness, as an actual subject."⁵⁷ As long as the idea of God is only an idea, it remains in the realm of potentiality and not actuality. But for the subject to be convinced of the truth of something, the subject must perceive it to be actually existing in the sphere of actuality.⁵⁸ So, from the perspective of the religious believer, the truth of God is attested by the fact that he becomes incarnate and enters the empirical world of actuality. This provides the certainty that the believer, living in the realm of sense perception, needs.

The second perspective concerns that of the idea of the divine itself. According to Hegel, there is an inner logic in this idea itself that necessitates that the abstract idea must become concrete or that the universal must become particular. It lies in the nature of ideas that they must be actualized, that is, must become different from the original, purely abstract idea. But this difference is overcome insofar as the actualized idea is seen to correspond to or to embody the original idea and not to deviate from it. Hegel explains this in his own language as follows: "Eternal being-in-and-for-itself is what discloses itself, determines itself, divides itself, posits itself as what is differentiated from itself, but the difference is at the same time constantly sublated. Thereby actual being in and for itself constantly returns into itself—only in this way is it spirit."⁵⁹ The concrete entity must accurately reflect the universal idea.

The divine must be a free self-conscious agent. But according to the dialectic of recognition, for full freedom to take place, the individual must also recognize others as free. This also holds true for the divine. God cannot be a tyrant who subordinates people or treats them like children who need correction. On the contrary, the true concept of the divine is as a free entity that recognizes

⁵⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 198–211; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 131–42. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 290–310; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 215–33.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 211–23; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 143–54. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 310–28; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 233–51.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 291; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 216.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

the freedom of the believers: "It is only for the being that is free that freedom is; it is only for the free human being that an other has freedom too."⁶⁰ This is what Hegel was tracing in his detailed account of the previous religions of the world, which all conceived of humans as being subordinate to nature, fate, or the capricious gods. Only Christianity recognizes the full capacity of human beings as free, rational agents. This is what the entire history of world religion has been working toward.

As was seen above, the first form of differentiation is that God creates the world as his Other. The world is the actualized idea. This is the original division or separation. Here the world or the universe is the other of God: "Looked at from this standpoint, that [first] other is not the Son but rather the external world, the finite world, which is outside the truth—the world of finitude, where the other has the form of being, and yet by its nature is only the *ἕτερον*, the determinate, what is distinct, limited, negative."⁶¹ God as spirit stands opposed to the entire world of appearance, which is the sphere of nature. But while spirit is opposed to nature, it lies in its concept to overcome nature. Indeed, this is what spirit is. Human beings have a natural element in them with their natural drives and needs. But, as spirit, they can overcome this natural side and cultivate them or appropriate them into elements of spirit.

Hegel recalls how the earlier religions regarded the realm of nature to be a revelation of the divine.⁶² The divine was revealed in natural objects and living creatures. But, as Hegel has argued, since human beings are spirit, this conception of the divine as an object of nature is inadequate.⁶³ But the true other of God is not an object or a thing, but rather another self-conscious entity. Nature must be overcome. Hegel refers to this with a reference to Judaism: in the religions of nature, God is conceived as "particular appearances" which "belong to the realm of the natural."⁶⁴ But, he continues:

God, however, must be conceived as spirit, and the element in which we cognize him must likewise be spiritual. "God thunders with his thundering voice," it is said, "and yet is not recognized"; the spiritual person, however, demands something loftier than what is merely natural. In order to be recognized as spirit, God must do more than thunder.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 292; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 217.

⁶¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 293; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 218.

⁶² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 294n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 219n: "We have already seen how this relationship of spirit to nature is present in the ethnic religions where we encountered those forms that belong to the advance of spirit from immediacy, in which nature is taken as contingent, to necessity and to a wise and purposeful mode of activity."

⁶³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 294n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 219n.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 294n-295n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 219n. Here Hegel perhaps refers to 1 Samuel 7:10: "As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines, and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel." The editors of *LPR* and *VPR* refer to Job 37:5.

Hegel's point is clear: a god of spirit must be more than simply a manifestation of natural force.

11.4.2. The Division in Humans and the Fall

The complex relation of nature to spirit is also found in each human being. Humans are a combination of a natural and a spiritual element. This is captured in the old debate about whether humans are by nature good or evil. Hegel explores both views. If one says that humans are good by nature, this refers to a certain conception of humans as spirit; it conceives of humans as having the potential to do good.⁶⁶ This is in a sense correct, but it is one-sided, failing to recognize that human beings live in the world and have drives and desires that they must struggle with. To say that humans are potentially good is at the same time to recognize that there are times when they fail to live up to this potential: "Humanity is 'implicitly' good: this means that human beings are good only in an inner way, or according to the concept, and not according to their actuality."⁶⁷ To say that humans are good by nature, thus fails to take this side into account.

Similarly, the view that says that humans are by nature evil is also one-sided. This conception focuses exclusively on the natural side of human beings and fails to recognize that to be human is precisely to grow and develop and thus to overcome this side. It is true that one can conceive of humans as purely natural, as acting entirely based on their drives and immediate needs. But this is not a fully human picture. For "humanity as spirit is what steps forth out of natural life and passes over into a separation between its concept and its immediate existence."⁶⁸ The fact that humans feel guilt and remorse for their actions is clear evidence that they are more than simply their natural side. They also have a higher element in them which can be actualized. Humans do not need to act immediately on their natural drives. It lies in the nature of humans in the course of their development and education to overcome this side.⁶⁹ The idea that we can impute responsibility to people recognizes that they have the ability in their will to decide between their immediate, natural drives and their reason. The state of innocence fails to do justice to this view since in such a state there is no conflict in the will. Thus one cannot attribute moral responsibility to one in a state of innocence who simply acts immediately and spontaneously in accordance with their own drives, like the animals. But the fully human conception is to have this dual nature in oneself and to

⁶⁶ Hegel, Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 202; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 134f. *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 296; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 221.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 297; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 221.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 299; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 223.

overcome the natural side with reason or spirit. The emphasis on the one side or the other of human nature simply demonstrates that there is a split between the actuality, or the immediate natural side of man, and the notion of man. The resolution has not yet fully taken place. So Hegel concludes that the question of man is a false dichotomy.

This discussion provides Hegel with another occasion to discuss the Fall from Genesis.⁷⁰ But since we have already treated this in his account of Judaism, we can forgo his analysis here.⁷¹ The upshot of Hegel's account of the Fall here is that the biblical story gives evidence for the awareness of human freedom. It shows that humans are divided between nature and spirit and, with their freedom, can overcome the natural element. This marks the absolutely essential element in the development of human culture and religion.⁷² While in the past religions humans were alienated from the divine, here for the first time they are reconciled with it. They see the divine element in themselves in their freedom and rationality: "Because this has now happened, human dignity is simultaneously raised to a much higher plane. Because of it the subject acquires absolute importance and becomes an essential object of the interest of God, since it is a self-consciousness that has being on its own account."⁷³ Here we can see that Hegel's treatment of the other world religions was not in vain. Rather it was intended to demonstrate the truth of Christianity on exactly this point.

The division or alienation in human beings is expressed in different relations. The first is the relation to God. This is expressed in terms of sorrow or anguish and corresponds to the unhappy consciousness.⁷⁴ This is the realization on the part of the religious believers that they are sinful and infinitely separated from the divine. Everything that one does in the mundane sphere is tainted by one's sinful nature. The believer thus sorrows over the evil in him- or herself. The sorrow arises out of an awareness that one should not be sinful, and the human condition should not be the way it is. Historically, Hegel seems to take this to refer to Judaism.⁷⁵

A second relation is that of the believer to the world. This view regards the world as being corrupt and sinful. This is expressed as misery insofar as the believer is condemned to live in this world. Since the individual is confronted with a world where it is impossible to gain truth or freedom, the individual retreats into himself in order to find it there. This refers historically to the Roman world and specifically to the movements of Stoicism and Skepticism

⁷⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 101–8; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 38–44. *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 207–11; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 139–42. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 300–4; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 224–8.

⁷¹ See Chapter 8, section 8.4.3 above.

⁷² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 208; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 140.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 126–38; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 167–81. See also *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 307f.; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 231.

⁷⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 108; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 44. *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 308; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 231.

that Hegel also discusses in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁷⁶ These were the movements of spirit that led to the breakthrough of Christianity. Both the first and the second relation involved a separation, an alienation, and a division that was in need of reconciliation. This is what Christianity offered. The reconciliation offered by Stoicism as a retreat to thought is inadequate since it remains purely abstract, that is, in thought. What the human mind wants is a real reconciliation in the actual world itself.⁷⁷

11.4.3. The Reconciliation

This leads Hegel to the second part of his analysis: the reconciliation of God.⁷⁸ According to his view, it is the greatest of human needs to overcome alienation and separation.⁷⁹ By this he means the alienation both from God and from oneself as a human being. Here one thinks immediately of Judaism, where there is an infinite split between the divine and the human due to the original sin. But Hegel also has in mind the alienation that he believes characterized the Roman world in the forms just mentioned. In both Judaism and the Roman world, humans felt an alienation from the divine, an infinite distance between themselves and the holy. But, for Hegel, the truth does not lie in isolated opposition or separation, but rather in a higher unity. Christianity appears at a specific historical time and place in order to meet this basic human need. It brings about the longed for reconciliation.

Hegel explains that reconciliation has both a subjective and an objective side.⁸⁰ He begins with the former by raising the question of whether the individual is capable of achieving this reconciliation by means of his own actions.⁸¹ It is often thought that the pious believer by means of prayer, humility, chastity, etc., can overcome sin and attain a unity with God. But Hegel points out that this is a one-sided or merely *subjective* reconciliation. He recalls Kant's theory that we cannot ultimately know whether the universe is so constructed that God will reward pious acts, but, as a postulate of practical reason, we must presuppose this to be the case for our ethical worldview to make sense.⁸² So our ethical action is based not on knowledge but on a presupposition or postulate that we are obliged to make. While Hegel agrees

⁷⁶ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 210f.; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 142. *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 308; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 231. Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 119–38; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 158–81.

⁷⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 309; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 232f.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 109–33; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 45–69. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 211–23; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 143–63. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 310–28; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 233–51.

⁷⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 310; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 233.

⁸⁰ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 310; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 233.

⁸¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 212f.; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 143f.

⁸² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 212; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 144.

that this is correct, it is not the whole story. This leaves the individual in a state of sorrow and longing, hoping that the presupposition is correct. It is not the full satisfaction of reconciliation. Thus this represents the truth of reconciliation but only from the subjective or, as he says, potential or implicit side. What is needed for the full reconciliation is also the *objective* side.

But for this actualization to take place objectively, God must reflect the idea of the divine.⁸³ What is required is for God to externalize Himself not as an object but rather as Spirit. Thus, at the second stage God makes Himself particular in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the means of reconciliation. Through the Son, God enters the world of actuality in the form most appropriate to Him, Spirit. In this manner, an opposition arises between Father and Son, which mutually reflect and determine each other. Hegel explains, the divine “is, in fact, the negative in its own self and, moreover, the negativity of thought or negativity as it is in itself in essence; i.e., simple essence is absolute *difference* from itself, or its pure othering of itself.”⁸⁴ At this stage God by means of Christ becomes “the self-opposed or ‘other’ of itself.”⁸⁵ Universality then stands opposed to particularity and abstraction to concretion, with each term being the opposite of the other: the “*actuality* or self-consciousness [sc. Christ], and the *in-itself* as substance [sc. God, the Father], are its two moments through whose reciprocal externalization, each becoming the other, Spirit comes into existence as this their unity.”⁸⁶

What the idea of Christ represents, for Hegel, is the awareness that the divine is in fact human and that the human, or an aspect of it, is in fact divine. This is the implicit reconciliation since it lies in the concept of the divine itself and not just in the subjective side of the individual believer. Hegel explains the unity of the human and the divine as follows:

The possibility of reconciliation resides only in the fact that the implicitly subsisting unity of divine and human nature is known; this is the necessary foundation. Human beings can know themselves to be taken up into God inasmuch as God is not something alien to them and they are not related to him as an extrinsic accident—[i.e.,] when they are taken up into God in accordance with their essence, their freedom and subjectivity. But this is possible only in virtue of the fact that this subjectivity of human nature is [present] within God himself.⁸⁷

In this key passage one can see in some ways the culmination of the entire development of the history of the world religions that Hegel has been tracing. The previous religions did not fully recognize human subjectivity and subjective freedom. Their gods reflected this shortcoming. Only in Christianity is

⁸³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 213; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 144.

⁸⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 465; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 584.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 467; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 587.

⁸⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 457; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 575.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 314n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 236n.

this principle of subjectivity and freedom fully realized. It appears in the very nature of the Christian God as an incarnated human being. This is an acknowledgment that what is the highest, what is divine, is not an object of nature and not an abstraction but in fact something human.

With Christianity humanity realizes for the first time what the true nature of humanity is (freedom and subjectivity) and at the same time what the true nature of God is (something human). Hegel explains, "The unity of divine and human nature, humanity in its universality, is the thought of humanity, and the idea of absolute spirit, which has being in and for itself."⁸⁸ Human freedom and subjectivity is something divine, something which separates humans from nature. This is recognized in the Christian divinity as a free human being with inwardness and subjectivity. In the story of the creation in Genesis, it is said that God created man in his own image and that God breathes the spirit of life into Adam.⁸⁹ This means that all humans have this spirit in them.

But this awareness of the unity of human and divine nature is at one level abstract. It is understandable from the perspective of philosophical speculation, but this is not accessible to the common believer. What the believer needs is the certainty of this by means of the senses. This is where the idea of the revelation in the form of a concrete human being comes in. The Revelation of God in Christ is a key feature of the Christian religion for Hegel, and it is for this reason that he designates it "the revealed religion" in the *Phenomenology*. The Revelation is significant since it represents God showing Himself, revealing Himself, or making Himself known to humanity. In the long story of the development of conceptions of the divine that Hegel has traced, he has shown that there is a movement from alienation to reconciliation. In earlier religions, there is an alienation from nature and the world, when the divine was conceived as something foreign, distant, or radically other. By contrast, in Christianity the divine is revealed, and humanity can thereby be reconciled with it. One of Hegel's main arguments is that the Christian religion must have a concrete content. As has been seen, he is critical of a merely formal conception of belief that is not related to anything specific. Moreover, this content is revealed and for this reason is known. He claims that this feature of Christianity renders absurd those views that claim that humans cannot know the divine. God revealed Himself to humanity so that He could be known. Thus the Revelation itself is a proof that faith is in fact a kind of knowing. It would be absurd to imagine that God revealed Himself and yet failed to reveal anything. If He revealed Himself, then there must be some content in that revelation.

The common believer perceives Christ by means of the senses, and this sense certainty is united with the idea of God. Human beings can thus immediately relate to the divine in human form. Hegel writes in "The Spirit

⁸⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 313n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 238n.

⁸⁹ There is a well-known word play at work here, where the word for "spirit" is the same as the word for "breath," in Hebrew "*ruach*" and in Latin, "*spiritus*."

of Christianity and its Fate,” “Faith in Jesus means more than knowing his real personality, feeling one’s own reality as inferior to his in might and strength, and being his servant. Faith is a knowledge of spirit through spirit, and only like spirits can know and understand one another; unlike ones can know only that they are not what the other is.”⁹⁰ Thereby the earlier forms of religious alienation are overcome: in Hinduism, for example, the divine is revealed in the form of different animals, but the individual cannot see himself in this form of the divine. Thus, the culmination of the story of different forms of revelation is Christianity where God makes Himself known as a human being. Only in this way does the alien element of the divine disappear: “Spirit is known as self-consciousness and to this self-consciousness it is immediately revealed, for Spirit is this self-consciousness itself. The divine nature is the same as the human, and it is this unity that is beheld.”⁹¹

It might be objected that other religions prior to Christianity also had a conception of revelation. So what makes Christianity so special as “the revealed religion”? According to Hegel, the nature of the revelation is key. The revelation must accurately reflect the true nature of God and implicitly the true nature of human beings. Thus when previous religions have stories of divine revelations in different forms of animals or objects of nature, these are not adequate. These revelations do not reflect the true nature of God. Only the revelation of God as a human being reveals the true nature of God as a free spirit with subjectivity: “The divine must appear in the form of immediacy. The immediate presence is only the presence of the spiritual in its spiritual shape, i.e., in the human shape. In no other way is the appearance genuine—not, for instance, the appearance of God in the burning bush, and the like.”⁹²

According to Hegel, it is a shortcoming of Judaism that God exists only for thought but not for perception. It was the idea of a living human being as incarnate God that outraged the Pharisees and the Jewish religious authorities at the time of Christ. The God of Judaism thus remains abstract and does not enter into the realm of freedom and subjectivity. Greek polytheism falls into just the opposite trap: the divinities appear in the realm of the senses all the time but the universal element is lacking. In this sense Christianity can be seen as bringing together these two religions in a higher form, reconciling the abstraction of Judaism with the concretion of Greek polytheism.

Hegel then turns to the meaning of the death of Christ. The key point for Hegel in the Christian conception of the divine is that God is a human being. The human side is demonstrated by the fact that Christ, like all humans, dies.⁹³ Moreover, the way in which he dies in “shame and humiliation” emphasizes the human element.⁹⁴ But the fact that God can die in this way represents a

⁹⁰ Hegel, *ETW*, p. 239; *TJ*, p. 289.

⁹¹ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 460; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 578.

⁹² Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 315n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 237n.

⁹³ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 323n; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 246n–7n.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 323n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 247n.

radical transformation of human values. What is usually honored and valued in society is now rejected and a new value system arises. The Christian revolution is one that turns the traditional Roman values on their head. It is a rejection of the corrupt state to which Rome had sunk under the emperors, where all values were perverted and tarnished by the absolute power of the emperor.

The idea that God is dead is one that, according to Hegel, characterized the spiritual state of things in the early Roman Empire. The world was corrupt, and there was nothing that anyone could do about it. God had abandoned the world. This is the world of religious alienation and separation, the world of the unhappy consciousness. However, the idea of the resurrection of Christ represents the triumph over the corrupt human world. The corruption dies a natural death, but then something higher, something divine, is reborn out of this death. According to Hegel's metaphysics, the creation and the incarnation represent the first step or position; then the death of Christ on the cross represents the second step of negation. Now with the resurrection, the third stage is reached, that is, the negation of the negation.⁹⁵ This movement of the Christian religion thus represents the triad and development of speculative philosophy.

The resurrection can be seen as the overcoming of the corrupt world. It demonstrates that there is something higher in human nature, that is, spirit that can rise above the mundane sphere. This is a part of what humans are. It is their potential to be spirit and to overcome their natural being. In the doctrine of the resurrection, humans can see that this is possible. In his death, Christ demonstrates the death of the world that people were alienated from. The resurrection shows that humans can rise above their natural limitations. Human finitude, as tied to nature, can be overcome by the mind, by spirit. What is truly valuable is what comes from spirit, the highest part of what is human.

The broader idea is that the death and resurrection of Christ represent symbolically a process that is to take place in each and every human being. Each of us has a natural side with drives, impulses, and irrationality, what in religious language is called sin. Christ shows us that we can overcome this. We have within ourselves, not just this natural side that we share with the animals, but also a spiritual side. The teachings of Christ focus on the ethical doctrine of love as an important element of what characterizes this side. We thus all have the potential to become beings who can love and thus live according to the aspect of spirit and not nature.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 324n; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 247n.

⁹⁶ See *PhS*, p. 475; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 597: "The death of the divine Man, as death, is abstract negativity, the immediate result of the movement which ends only in *natural* universality. Death loses this natural meaning in spiritual self-consciousness, i.e. it comes to be its just stated Notion; death becomes transfigured from its immediate meaning, viz. the non-being of this *particular* individual, into the *universality* of Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected."

This brings about the notion of reconciliation. By eliminating the natural, humans are reconciled with themselves and with their true nature as beings of spirit. Similarly, they are reconciled with God since God is also a being of spirit. When humans act with love and not hatred, then they act divinely. This kind of activity shows that God is at home in the mundane world and not infinitely separated in an unknown beyond. Human beings can know the divine since it is a part of themselves. Christ's death and resurrection represent the reconciliation.

The Christian message of love is the key for understanding the importance of recognition in the development of both human beings and world religions. Hegel explains:

When we say, "God is love," we are saying something very great and true. . . . Love is a distinguishing of two, who nevertheless are absolutely not distinguished for each other. The consciousness or feeling of the identity of the two—to be outside of myself and in the other—that is love. I have my self-consciousness not in myself but in the other. I am satisfied and have peace with myself only in this other—and I *am* only because I have peace with myself. . . . This other, because it likewise exists outside itself, has its self-consciousness only in me, and both the other and I are only this consciousness of being-outside-ourselves and of our identity; we are only this intuition, feeling, and knowledge of our unity. This is love, and without knowing that love is both a distinguishing and the sublation of the distinction, one speaks emptily of it.⁹⁷

Here Hegel makes clear that what we are as human beings is necessarily bound up with our relation to other human beings. In a relation of love we find our true selves in the other. The Christian message of love is thus a profound one that holds the key to understanding human fulfillment and freedom. In order to be free, we must live in a relation of love with others who freely love and respect us. According to Hegel, this understanding of freedom and individuality did not exist before Christianity. The idea of love is something divine, an important element of spirit that helps us overcome our natural side.

The story of Christ represents, for Hegel, the culmination of the world religions. Here for the first time people come to realize that the human is God as immediate and present. God is not some radically other kind of being, as in the religions of nature. Likewise, God is not a wholly transcendent being, as in Judaism. Rather the human is God. The divine exists in each and every one of us: "God has shown himself to be reconciled with the world . . . even the human is not something alien to him, but rather . . . this otherness, this self-distinguishing, finitude as it is expressed, is a moment of God himself, although, to be sure, it is a disappearing moment."⁹⁸ The otherness of the divine has now been overcome.

⁹⁷ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 276; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 201f.

⁹⁸ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 327; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 250.

We need merely to follow the example of Christ and overcome the evil, sinful part of ourselves. For Hegel, this is a long historical process. It is only fully realized in the Christian community with the idea of the Holy Spirit, the third part of the Trinity.

According to the development of the Concept, Christ is the particular that has emerged from the universal. As a concrete particular, he has thus overcome the abstraction of the divine in the beyond of the previous stage. However, the particular, although being an advance in the development of the Concept, is still inadequate. The particular is empirical and transitory. Christ as a particular is not present to humanity forever. It is a mistake to think that one's faith should be fixed on the particular as such. This leads to a kind of fetishism, whereby the believer is fixated on the concrete and empirical: one collects bones of the saint, or splinters of the cross; one searches for the Holy Grail or the funeral shroud of Jesus. It is, according to Hegel, a mistake to understand the meaning of Christ solely as a particular in this way. Christ rebukes those who believe only because they have seen miracles. The particular points beyond itself to something higher. But in order to reach this, the particular must perish. Only when the particular has disappeared can the new principle emerge.

11.5. INDIVIDUALITY: THE REALM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The third step in the development of the Christian Concept of the divine is the Holy Spirit, in which the universal God in the beyond is united with the particular revealed God.⁹⁹ The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the divine as it lives on in the community of religious believers. Hegel writes, "Spirit is thus posited in the third element in *universal self-consciousness*; it is its *community*."¹⁰⁰ The importance of this third and final stage is that the shortcomings of abstract universality and concrete particularity are overcome. It is in this third stage that humans finally reach the full development of freedom that they have been striving for throughout history: "this sphere [is] the kingdom of Spirit. It involves knowing oneself as having within oneself, as this individual, infinite worth, absolute freedom, and the infinite power to maintain oneself in this other pure and simple."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 133–62; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 69–97. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 223–47; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 153–76. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 328–47; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 251–70. *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 371–3; *VPR*, Part 3, pp. 287–9. *PhS*, pp. 471–8; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 592–601.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 594.

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, p. 135; *VPR*, Part 3, p. 71.

In Christianity believers are taught to love each other and to love God. This means to love some particular person and to regard that as absolute. In this way subjective freedom is something that is also extended to the other since the other is also absolute. Although the other is a concrete particular, an object of sense perception, he or she is regarded as having absolute value and worth. For Hegel, this sensuous element is fleeting, and must be overcome by the more enduring realm of thought. This is represented in the movement from Christ to the Holy Spirit. With the death of Christ it is no longer possible to hang fixedly on to the particular; now one is compelled to contemplate the universal nature of the message, which is not some empirical thing but an idea. But it is no longer an abstract and empty idea as at the first stage of pure universality. Now in the Holy Spirit the Christian idea is full of content by virtue of the life and teachings of Christ that it contains. This is embodied in the spirit of the Christian community that is constantly contemplating and appropriating it in the specific context of the community.

The particular, Christ, must therefore perish in order to establish an enduring truth for the religious community. In this way the sphere of nature is overcome and the revelation is completed as an idea. Only in death is the idea of Christ truly realized: "The movement of the community as self-consciousness that has distinguished itself from its picture-thought is to make explicit what has been implicitly established. The dead divine man or human God is *in himself* the universal self-consciousness."¹⁰² In the Holy Spirit the abstract God in the beyond and the particular incarnate God are unified, and the dualism ceases. Universal and particular are sublated in the individual. The individual believer is united with Spirit. Thus, Hegel regards the Holy Spirit as reconciling any number of key dualisms and forms of alienation that have plagued earlier religions. Therefore, only in Christianity is humanity reconciled with the world and the truth known.

Hegel's criticism of Catholicism is that it is overly fixated on the realm of the particular and sense experience.¹⁰³ This leads to a reverence of physical relics and the cult of saints. Catholicism, in his view, does not fully appreciate the need to move past this and understand the deeper philosophical truth that includes the particular, but at a higher level. For Hegel, the Catholic view makes Christ into an arbitrary individual; but this misses the point of the deeper meaning that he has as a part of the universal. The point of the resurrection is that one is to leave behind the individual things in the realm of sense. It points to something higher than the realm of immediate sense perception.

¹⁰² Hegel, *PhS*, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 594f.

¹⁰³ See Peter Jonkers, "Hegel on Catholic Religion," in *Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions*, ed. by Bart Labuschagne and Timo Slootweg, Leiden and Boston: Brill 2012, pp. 177–205. Peter Jonkers, "Eine ungeistige Religion. Hegel über den Katholizismus," *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, vol. 12, 2010, pp. 400–5.

Relics and the history of Christ all represent something external, something outward. The point of the Holy Spirit is that it brings about a shift that moves the essence of Christianity to something inward. It is the Christian message in the hearts and minds of the individual believers. The Holy Spirit is thus essential for a full appreciation of subjective freedom and the right and value of the individual. It recognizes the importance of the inward nature of the individual and downplays the objective, external world. The Holy Spirit is the Christian continuation of Socrates' message to find the truth within oneself.

The Christian view is also key for the revolution in the political order and a complete transformation for how law is conceived. In the Roman world, rights and power were delegated based on things such as lineage, property, and wealth. The individual was recognized not as an individual but only as someone who came from a specific family or clan or someone who had money or power. That meant that all the other people who were not lucky enough to be distinguished by such things were not regarded as having any value at all. In such a world, slavery is a natural institution. But Christianity does away with all of this since it recognized that there is something divine in each and every person. Every individual is valuable and equal before God. Translated into the sphere of politics, this means that there is a concept of universal rights and freedom, that is, something that should be extended to everyone regardless of personal distinctions.

Hegel speaks at some length about the nature and role of the church. It is in the church that the Holy Spirit is present as the spirit of Christ in the community of believers. Through the church the individuals are aware of the truth of spirit and appropriate it concretely in different ways in their own lives. This demonstrates that the truth is not something far away in a transcendent sphere or something that cannot be known by flawed and sinful human beings. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit in the Christian community shows that the truth exists in the here and now. People can know the truth: the divine is human, and they share a divine element with God. They can further act on the truth through their own loving actions, which they carry out based on their subjective freedom. This also means that reconciliation is not something that the believer still waits for in some indeterminate time in the future; rather, it is something that has already taken place.

11.6. THE END OF HEGEL'S LECTURES

We now reach the end of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. He has, he believes, achieved his goal of demonstrating the truth of Christianity over the other world religions. Now at the end of his analysis of the historical development of the concept of the divine, it is possible to see why he thinks that Christianity is the culmination of the world's religions.

First, for Hegel, with each step there is an increasingly accurate conception of the divine. The picture of the divine becomes gradually clearer with each new religion in the sequence. Initially the divine is revealed as an object of nature: the moon, the sun, a river, a mountain, a plant, an animal, light, fire, etc. Then the divine is revealed as mixed human and animal forms (in the Egyptian religion). In the Greek and Roman religion there is the first inkling of the true human nature of the divine in the sense that the Greek heroes are both human and divine and the Roman emperors are deified. But only in Christianity is God completely revealed as a flesh and blood human being. Hegel's idea is that this understanding of the divine is the correct one, that is, the only one that corresponds with the idea of the divine. But this idea does not come out adequately in the earlier expressions. It is revealed inadequately in different objects that merely obscure the divine element. A key point in the increased degree of revelation is the gradual understanding of the divine as spirit.¹⁰⁴ While early conceptions of the divine showed isolated aspects of spirit, which were always hidden or obscure, only in Christianity does spirit as spirit appear. This realization is the culmination of the development of religion.

Second, with this increasing understanding of the divine as spirit, there is a decreasing sense of alienation from the divine. The conception of the divine becomes less and less foreign, as it comes closer and closer to becoming spirit.¹⁰⁵ Since the true conception of the divine is as a human being, all the previous conceptions fail to correspond to this by differing degrees. One cannot relate to an object of nature or to an animal in the same way that that one can relate to a human being. Here the dialectic of recognition can be fully realized: one human being can recognize another human being. Thus the idea of a fully human God in Christ is necessary for completely overcoming the religious alienation that humans have suffered from throughout history. This then leads to reconciliation and genuine liberation from nature.¹⁰⁶ With this new conception, humans realize for the first time that they are free to make their own decisions and to act on them. They are no longer dependent on oracles or signs from nature to show them the way.¹⁰⁷

Finally, this development of the conception of the divine corresponds to a more general development in the conception of what a human being is. Only after the long course of history do humans finally come to the realization that there is something infinite and absolute about each individual. There is

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 324; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 416: "Man himself therefore is comprehended in the idea of God, and this comprehension may be thus expressed—that the unity of man with God is posited in the Christian religion. But this unity must not be superficially conceived, as if God were only man, and man, without further condition, were God. Man, on the contrary, is God only in so far as he annuls the merely natural and limited in his spirit and elevates himself to God."

¹⁰⁵ See *PhS*, p. 417; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 527.

¹⁰⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 319; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 410.

¹⁰⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 334f.; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 428.

something unique and precious about individuals that must be protected and preserved. This is the idea that there is something divine in humans. Hegel explains, "Man, finite when regarded for himself, is yet at the same time the image of God and a fountain of infinity in himself. He is the object of his own existence—has in himself an infinite value, an eternal destiny."¹⁰⁸ This realization has major repercussions for many different spheres of human activity, such as ethics, law, politics, and medicine. It radically changes the understanding of the place of humans in the world. With the introduction of Christianity, the institution of slavery was no longer viable since every individual, even a slave, was equal before God and shared something divine with God.¹⁰⁹

The reason that Hegel takes Christianity to be the culmination of the development of religion is closely connected to his view of the development of world history. Hegel's bold thesis is that the periods of history can be categorized according to their role in the movement towards freedom.¹¹⁰ He divides the material into four main periods: the Oriental world, the Greek world, the Roman world, and the Germanic world. Each progressive stage represents a further emancipation of the human spirit.¹¹¹ He states somewhat schematically: the Oriental World represents the childhood of history, where only one person is free, namely, the emperor. The Greek World appears as a higher stage, the adolescence of history. Here more than one person is free since there is a large class of free people, but yet there is also a large class of slaves. The Roman World represents the manhood of history. Here with the arrival of Christianity and the erosion of slavery a new principle begins to dawn, which is only fully developed in the modern world, represented by Germanic culture. Finally, the Germanic World represents the old age of history. Hereafter the oppressive institutions have largely been overcome, all people are regarded as free. He explains:

The German nations, under the influence of Christianity, were the first to attain the consciousness, that man, as man, is free: that it is the *freedom* of Spirit which constitutes its essence. This consciousness arose first in religion, the inmost region of Spirit; but to introduce the principle into the various relations of the actual world, involves a more extensive problem than its simple implantation; a problem whose solution and application require a severe and lengthened process of culture.¹¹²

The idea of freedom has developed in history. With this idea an individual is regarded as autonomous and possessing rights *qua* individual. All people are created equal and have intrinsic value. The idea arrives in the Enlightenment

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 333; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 427.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 334; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 427f.

¹¹⁰ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 18; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 45.

¹¹¹ Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 18; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 45.

¹¹² Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 18; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 45f.

and has been modified ever since. Hegel's conception of history is thus teleological and aims at the complete emancipation of humanity, or put differently, at the realization of human freedom. Despite the modifications, there is no further development beyond the point that one realizes that everyone is free.

11.7. HEGEL AND THE WORLD RELIGIONS TODAY

We live today in a globalized world, which means that we have regular contact with people from different religious traditions. Prior to Hegel, the study of the philosophy of religion, insofar as it could be distinguished as a field unto itself, was dedicated more or less exclusively to Christianity. Hegel was among the first to recognize the importance of taking into account the other world religions and including them as an important and necessary element in this discipline. In this sense, he anticipated the developments of our modern world, recognizing the need for a religious dialogue that goes beyond Christianity. This shift in focus in the field of the philosophy of religion reflects a broader movement whereby traditional schools of divinity or faculties of theology, charged with training clergy, changed their profile to become departments of religious studies. This process is still taking place in our time.

Today many of the movements that fall under the heading of esotericism are associated with Eastern religions. Ever since the 1960s in the West there has been great interest in, for example, Buddhism, Hinduism, and ancient Chinese philosophy. There have also been attempts to revive dead religions such as that of ancient Egypt and paganism. So the modern issues concerning Orientalism are not confined to the scholarly debates about the nature and status of the academic fields of Asian Studies, such as those initiated by Edward W. Said, nor are they limited to questions of the proper canon for education, such as those taken up by Allan Bloom and others. Instead, what can be regarded as modern forms of Orientalism can be found right at the heart of modern Western culture and everyday religious practice.

Hegel's philosophy of religion offers a critical response to the modern intuitions that lie behind these different movements, and his insights are potentially of great value in our modern debates. It should be noted that Hegel's dialectical approach always means that he has both a positive and a negative view towards these traditions of thought. He can see the element of truth in them, while also identifying what he regards as aspects that are worthy of criticism.

Hegel has shown that it is important to study and understand the religions and belief systems of the East. He is open to acknowledge the ways in which modern Western culture has been influenced by other religious traditions. Thus, he can offer a voice of understanding and tolerance in our modern

multicultural world. His belief that there is truth in all religions enjoins us to take different religious traditions and beliefs seriously and to extend our respect to them.

Hegel treats the objects of religion like any other object of scholarly investigation and argues that since we have a concept of God, this is something that can be known and rationally evaluated just like anything else. He shows that since these things have a rational basis they can be something objective on a par with other objects of scholarly investigation. Moreover, he can be seen as one of the founders of the modern fields of religious studies or comparative religion, which presuppose that it is meaningful to compare different religions or that there is some kind of rationality in religious belief.

Moreover, Hegel's analyses can provide useful insight into the modern movements of esotericism and indeed can help us to evaluate them. His historical contextualization helps us to understand what cultural conditions create an atmosphere that makes people feel a yearning for alternative forms of religion. But Hegel is, of course, not uncritical of the interest in Orientalism. He also issues a word of caution to people who are swept away with the sense of the exotic. He warns against immediately taking up some position or belief simply because it is foreign and contradicts views from our own culture that we feel alienated from. Instead, he claims that we still need to be critical of these views, even if they might seem to be immediately appealing. We should not make ourselves apologists for repressive customs and practices that undermine the dignity and integrity of the individual simply because we wish to embrace something new or different.

Perhaps what is most valuable in Hegel's complex account of the religions of the world is the underlying theory of subjective freedom and human development. While some critics have dismissed his theory as being Eurocentric, ethnocentric, and racist, they still hold firmly to the ideas of individuality, subjectivity, and the inalienable rights of the individual that are part and parcel of Hegel's view. Thus despite the criticisms, some of which doubtless have their merits, the key issues of philosophical anthropology remain open for critical discussion.

In Hegel's account of the world religions we can immediately recognize a number of important issues surrounding history, culture, and human development in general that are passionately discussed today. Hegel's position thus represents a serious challenge to many dearly held intuitions about religion in our own time. His voice can help us to navigate the troubled waters of religion in our globalized and multicultural society of the twenty-first century.

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